
THE
FIRST VIOLIN
HLP

THE FIRST VIOLIN



THE FIRST VIOLIN

A NOVEL BY

JESSIE FOTHERGILL

With Illustrations

BY

G. W. BRENNEMAN

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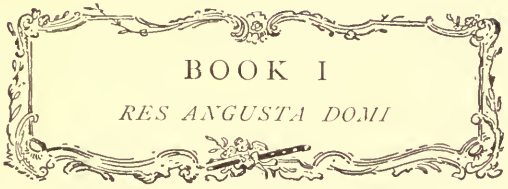
To A. C. H.

A SLIGHT TOKEN

OF

MY GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION

THE FIRST VIOLIN



BOOK I

RES ANGUSTA DOMI

CHAPTER I

MISS HALLAM

"WONDERFUL weather for April!" Yes, it certainly was wonderful. I fully agreed with the sentiment expressed at different periods of the day by different members of my family; but I did not follow their example and seek enjoyment out of doors—pleasure in that balmy spring air. Trouble—the first trouble of my life—had laid her hand heavily upon me. The world felt disjointed and all upside-down; I very helpless and lonely in it. I had two sisters, I had a father and a mother; but none the less was I unable to share my grief with any one of them; nay, it had been an absolute relief to me when first one and then another of them had left the house, on business or pleasure intent, and I, after watching my father go down the garden-walk, and seeing the gate close after him, knew

that, save for Jane, our domestic, who was carolling lustily to herself in the kitchen regions, I was alone in the house.

I was in the drawing-room. Once secure of solitude, I put down the sewing with which I had been pretending to employ myself, and went to the window—a pleasant, sunny bay. In that window stood a small work-table, with a flower-pot upon it, containing a lilac primula. I remember it distinctly to this day, and I am likely to carry the recollection with me so long as I live. I leaned my elbows upon this table, and gazed across the fields, green with spring grass, tenderly lighted by an April sun, to where the river—the Skern—shone with a pleasant, homely, silvery glitter, twining through the smiling meadows till he bent round the solemn, overhanging cliff crowned with mournful firs, which went by the name of the Rifted or Riven Scaur.

In some such delightful mead might the white-armed Nausicaa have tossed her cowslip balls amongst the other maids; perhaps by some such river might Persephone have paused to gather the daffodil—"the fateful flower beside the rill." Light clouds flitted across the sky, a waft of wind danced in at the open window, ruffling my hair mockingly, and bearing with it the deep sound of a church-clock striking four.

As if the striking of the hour had been a signal for the breaking of a spell, the silence that had prevailed came to an end. Wheels came rolling along the road up to the door, which, however, was at the other side of the house. "A visitor for my father, no doubt," I thought indiffer-

ently; "and he has gone out to read the funeral service for a dead parishioner. How strange! I wonder how clergymen and doctors can ever get accustomed to the grim contrasts amidst which they live!"

I suffered my thoughts to wander off in some such track as this, but they were all through dominated by a heavy sense of oppression—the threatening hand of a calamity which I feared was about to overtake me, and I had again forgotten the outside world.

The door was opened. Jane held it open and said nothing (a trifling habit of hers, which used to cause me much annoyance), and a tall woman walked slowly into the room. I rose and looked earnestly at her, surprised and somewhat nervous when I saw who she was—Miss Hallam, of Hallam Grange, our near neighbor, but a great stranger to us nevertheless, so far, that is, as personal intercourse went.

"Your servant told me that every one was out except Miss May," she remarked, in a harsh, decided voice, as she looked not so much at me as towards me, and I perceived that there was something strange about her eyes.

"Yes; I am sorry," I began doubtfully.

She had sallow, strongly-marked, but proud and aristocratic features, and a manner with more than a tinge of imperiousness. Her face, her figure, her voice were familiar, yet strange to me—familiar because I had heard of her, and been in the habit of occasionally seeing her from my very earliest childhood; strange, because she was reserved and not given to seeking her neighbors' houses

for purposes either of gossip or hospitality. I was aware that about once in two years she made a call at our house, the Vicarage, whether as a mark of politeness to us, or to show that, though she never entered a church, she still chose to lend her countenance and approval to the Establishment, or whether merely out of old use and habit, I knew not. I only knew that she came, and that until now it had never fallen to my lot to be present upon any of those momentous occasions.

Feeling it a little hard that my coveted solitude should thus be interrupted, and not quite knowing what to say to her, I sat down, and there was a moment's pause.

"Is your mother well?" she inquired.

"Yes, thank you, very well. She has gone with my sister to Darton."

"Your father?"

"He is well too, thank you. He has a funeral this afternoon."

"I think you have two sisters, have you not?"

"Yes; Adelaide and Stella."

"And which are you?"

"May. I am the second one."

All her questions were put in an almost severe tone, and not as if she took very much interest in me or mine. I felt my timidity increase, and yet—I liked her. Yes, I felt most distinctly that I liked her.

"May," she remarked meditatively; "May Wedderburn. Are you aware that you have a very pretty north-country sounding name?"

"I have not thought about it."

"How old are you?"

"I am a little over seventeen."

"Ah! And what do you do all day?"

"Oh!" I began doubtfully, "not much, I am afraid, that is useful or valuable."

"You are young enough yet. Don't begin to do things with a purpose for some time to come. Be happy whilst you can."

"I am not at all happy," I replied, not thinking of what I was saying, and then feeling that I could have bitten my tongue out with vexation. What could it possibly matter to Miss Hallam whether I were happy or not? She was asking me all these questions to pass the time, and in order to talk about *something* while she sat in our house.

"What makes you unhappy? Are your sisters disagreeable?"

"Oh *no!*"

"Are your parents unkind?"

"*Unkind!*" I echoed, thinking what a very extraordinary woman she was, and wondering what kind of experience hers could have been in the past.

"Then I cannot imagine what cause for unhappiness you can have," she said composedly.

I made no answer. I repented me of having uttered the words, and Miss Hallam went on:

"I should advise you to forget that there is such a thing as unhappiness. You will soon succeed."

"Yes—I will try," said I in a low voice, as the cause of my unhappiness rose up, gaunt, grim and forbidding, with thin lips curved in a mocking smile, and glittering, snake-like eyes fixed upon my face. I shivered faintly; and she, though looking quickly at me, seemed to think she had said enough about my happiness. Her next question surprised me much.

"Are you fair in complexion?" she inquired.

"Yes," said I. "I am very fair—fairer than either of my sisters. But are you near-sighted?"

"Near sight*less*," she replied, with a bitter little laugh. "Cataract. I have so many joys in my life that Providence has thought fit to temper the sunshine of my lot. I am to content myself with the store of pleasant remembrances with which my mind is crowded, when I can see nothing outside. A delightful arrangement. It is what pious people call a 'cross' or a 'visitation' or something of that kind. I am not pious, and I call it the destruction of what little happiness I had."

"Oh, I am very, *very* sorry for you," I answered, feeling what I spoke, for it had always been my idea of misery to be blind—shut away from the sunlight upon the fields, from the hue of the river, from all that "lust of the eye" which meets us on every side.

"But are you quite alone?" I continued. "Have you no one to——"

I stopped: I was about to add, "to be kind to you—to take care of you?" but I suddenly remembered that it would not do for me to ask such questions.

"No, I live quite alone," said she abruptly. "Did you think of offering to relieve my solitude?"

I felt myself burning with a hot blush all over my face, as I stammered out:

"I am sure I never thought of anything so impertinent, but—but—if there was anything I *could* do—read, or——"

I stopped again. Never very confident in myself, I felt a miserable sense that I might have been going too far. I wished most ardently that my mother or Adelaide had been there to take the weight of such a conversation from my shoulders. What was my surprise to hear Miss Hallam say, in a tone quite smooth, polished, and polite:

"Come and drink tea with me to-morrow afternoon—afternoon tea I mean. You can go away again as soon as you like. Will you?"

"Oh, thank you. Yes, I will."

"Very well. I shall expect you between four and five. Good-afternoon."

"Let me come with you to your carriage," said I hastily. "Jane—our servant is so clumsy."

I preceded her with care, saw her seated in her carriage and driven away towards the Grange, which was but a few hundred yards from our own gates, and then I returned to the house. And as I went in again, my companion-shadow glided once more to my side, with soft, insinuating, irresistible importunity, and I knew that it would be my faithful attendant for—who could say how long?



CHAPTER II

"Traversons gravement cette méchante mascarade qu'on appelle le monde."

THE houses in Skernford—the houses of the "gentry" that is to say—lay almost all on one side an old-fashioned, sleepy-looking "green," towards which their entrances lay; but their real front, their pleasantest aspect, was on their other side, facing the river which ran below, and down to which their gardens sloped in terraces. Our house, the Vicarage, lay nearest the church; Miss Hallam's house, the Grange, farthest from the church. Between these, larger and more imposing, in grounds beside which ours seemed to dwindle down to a few flower-beds, lay Deeplish Hall, whose owner, Sir Peter Le Marchant, had lately come to live there, at least for a time.

It was many years since Sir Peter Le Marchant, whose image at this time was fated to enter so largely and so much against my will into all my calculations, had lived at, or even visited his estate at Skernford. He was a man of immense property, and report said that Deeplish Hall, which we innocent villagers looked upon as such an imposing mansion, was but one, and not the grandest of his several country houses. All that I knew of his history—or rather, all that I had *heard* of it, whether truly or not, I was in no position to say—was but a vague and misty account; yet that little had given me a dislike to him before I ever met him.

Miss Hallam, our neighbor, who lived in such solitude and retirement, was credited with having a history—if report had only been able to fix upon what it was. She was popularly supposed to be of a grim and decidedly eccentric disposition. Eccentric she was, as I afterwards found—as I thought when I first saw her. She seldom appeared either in church or upon any other public occasion, and was said to be the deadly enemy of Sir Peter Le Marchant and all pertaining to him. There was some old, far-back romance connected with it—a romance which I did not understand, for up to now I had never known either her or Sir Peter sufficiently to take any interest in the story, but the report ran that in days gone by—how far gone by, too, they must have been! Miss Hallam—a young and handsome heiress, loved very devotedly her one sister, and that sister—so much was known as a fact—had become Lady Le Marchant: was not her monument in the

church between the Deeplish Hall and the Hallam Grange pews? Was not the tale of her virtues and her years—seven and twenty only did she count of the latter—there recorded? That Barbara Hallam had been married to Sir Peter was matter of history: what was not matter of history, but of tradition which was believed in quite as firmly, was that the Baronet had ill-treated his wife—in what way was not distinctly specified, but I have since learnt that it was true; she was a gentle creature, and he made her life miserable unto her. She was idolized by her elder sister, who, burning with indignation at the treatment to which her darling had been subjected, had become, even in disposition, an altered woman. From a cheerful, open-hearted, generous, somewhat brusque young person, she had grown into a prematurely old, soured, revengeful woman. It was to her that the weak and injured sister had fled; it was in her arms that she had died. Since her sister's death, Miss Hallam had withdrawn entirely from society, cherishing a perpetual grudge against Sir Peter Le Marchant. Whether she had relations or none, friends or acquaintance outside the small village in which she lived, none knew. If so, they limited their intercourse with her to correspondence, for no visitor ever penetrated to her damp old Grange, nor had she ever been known to leave it with the purpose of making any journey abroad. If perfect silence and perfect retirement could hush the tongues of tradition and report, then Miss Hallam's story should have been forgotten. But it was not forgotten. Such things never do become forgotten.

It was only since Sir Peter had appeared suddenly some six weeks ago at Deeplish Hall, that these dry bones of tradition had for me quickened into something like life, and had acquired a kind of interest for me.

Our father, as Vicar of the parish, had naturally called upon Sir Peter, and as naturally invited him to his house. His visits had begun by his coming to lunch one day, and we had speculated about him a little in advance, half-jestingly, raking up old stories, and attributing to him various evil qualities of a hard and loveless old age. But after he had gone, the verdict of Stella and myself was, "Much worse than we had expected." He was *different* from what we had expected. Perhaps that annoyed us. Instead of being able to laugh at him, we found something oppressive, chilling, to me frightful, in the cold sneering smile which seemed perpetually hovering about his thin lips —in the fixed, snaky glitter of his still, intent gray eyes. His face was pale, his manners were polished, but to meet his eye was a thing I hated, and the touch of his hand made me shudder. While speaking in the politest possible manner, he had eyed over Adelaide and me in a manner which I do not think either of us had ever experienced before. I hated him from the moment in which I saw him looking at me with an expression of approval. To be approved by Sir Peter Le Marchant, could fate devise anything more horrible? Yes, I knew now that it could: one might have to submit to the approval, to live in the approval. I had expressed my opinion on the subject with freedom to Adelaide, who to my surprise had not agreed with me, and had

told me coldly that I had no business to speak disrespectfully of my father's visitors. I was silenced, but unhappy. From the first moment of seeing Sir Peter, I had felt an uncomfortable, uneasy feeling, which had I been sentimental I might have called a presentiment, but I was not sentimental. I was a healthy young girl of seventeen, believing in true love, and goodness, and gentleness very earnestly; "fancy free," having read few novels, and heard no gossip—a very baby in many respects. Our home might be a quiet one, a poor one, a dull one—our circle of acquaintance small, our distractions of the most limited description imaginable, but at least we knew no evil, and—I speak for Stella and myself—thought none. Our father and mother were persons with nothing whatever remarkable about them. Both had been handsome. My mother was pretty, my father good-looking, yet. I loved them both dearly. It had never entered my head to do otherwise than love them, but the love which made the star and the poetry of my quiet and unromantic life was that I bore to Adelaide, my eldest sister. I believed in her devotedly, and accepted her judgment, given in her own peculiar proud, decided way, upon every topic on which she chose to express it. She was one and twenty, and I used to think I could lay down my life for her.

It was consequently a shock to me to hear her speak in praise—yes, in *praise* of Sir Peter Le Marchant. My first impulse was to distrust my own judgment, but no: I could not long do so. He *was* repulsive; he was stealthy, hard, *cruel*, in appearance. I could not account for Adelaide's

perversity in liking him, and passed puzzled days and racked my brain in conjecture as to why, when Sir Peter came, Adelaide should be always at home, always neat and fresh—not like me. Why was Adelaide, who found it too much trouble to join Stella and me in our homely concerts, always ready to indulge Sir Peter's taste for music, to entertain him with conversation?—and she *could* talk. She was unlike me in that respect. I never had a brilliant gift of conversation. She was witty about the things she did know, and never committed the fatal mistake of pretending to be up in the things she did not know. These gifts of mind, these social powers, were always ready for the edification of Sir Peter. By degrees the truth forced itself upon me. Some one said—I overheard it—that "that handsome Miss Wedderburn was undoubtedly setting her cap at Sir Peter Le Marchant." Never shall I forget the fury which at first possessed me, the conviction which gradually stole over me that it was true. My sister Adelaide, beautiful, proud, clever—and I had always thought good—had distinctly in view the purpose of becoming Lady Le Marchant. I shed countless tears over the miserable discovery, and dared not speak to her of it. But that was not the worst. My horizon darkened. One horrible day I discovered that it was I, and not Adelaide, who had attracted Sir Peter's attentions. It was not a scene, not a set declaration. It was a word in that smooth voice, a glance from that hated and chilling eye, which suddenly aroused me to the truth.

Shuddering, dismayed, I locked the matter up within

my own breast, and wished with a longing that sometimes made me quite wretched, that I could quit Skernford, my home, my life, which had lost zest for me, and was become a burden to me. The knowledge that Sir Peter admired me absolutely degraded me in my own eyes. I felt as if I could not hold up my head. I had spoken to no one of what had passed within me, and I trusted it had not been noticed; but all my joy was gone. It was as if I stood helpless while a noisome reptile coiled its folds around me.

To-day, after Miss Hallam's departure, I dropped into my now chronic state of listlessness and sadness. They all came back: my father from the church; my mother and Adelaide from Darton, whither they had been on a shopping expedition; Stella from a stroll by the river. We had tea, and they dispersed quite cheerfully to their various occupations. I, seeing the gloaming gently and dim falling over the earth, walked out of the house into the garden, and took my way towards the river. I passed an arbor in which Stella and I had loved to sit and watch the stream, and talk and read Miss Austen's novels. Stella was there now, with a well-thumbed copy of "Pride and Prejudice" in her hand.

"Come and sit down, May," she apostrophized me. "Do listen to this about Bingley and Wickham."

"No, thank you," said I abstractedly, and feeling that Stella was not the person to whom I could confide my woe. Indeed, on scanning mentally the list of my acquaintance, I found that there was not *one* in whom I could

confide. It gave me a strange sense of loneliness and aloofness, and hardened me more than the reading of a hundred satires on the meannesses of society.

I went along the terrace by the river-side, and looked up to the left—traces of Sir Peter again. There was the terrace of Deeplish Hall, which stood on a height just above a bend in the river. It was a fine old place. The sheen of the glass-houses caught the rays of the sun and glanced in them. It looked rich, old, and peaceful. I had been many a time through its gardens, and thought them beautiful, and wished they belonged to me. Now I felt that they lay in a manner at my feet, and my strongest feeling respecting them was an earnest wish that I might never see them again.

Thus agreeably meditating, I insensibly left our own garden and wandered on in the now quickly falling twilight into a narrow path leading across a sort of No-Man's-Land into the demesne of Sir Peter Le Marchant. In my trouble I scarcely remarked where I was going, and with my eyes cast upon the ground was wishing that I could feel again as I once had felt, when

"I nothing had, and yet enough";

and was sadly wondering what I could do to escape from the net in which I felt myself caught, when a shadow darkened the twilight in which I stood, and looking up I saw Sir Peter, and heard these words:

"Good-evening, Miss Wedderburn. Are you enjoying a little stroll?"

By, as it seemed to me, some strange miracle all my inward fears and tremblings vanished. I did not feel afraid of Sir Peter in the least. I felt that here was a crisis. This meeting would show me whether my fears had been groundless, and my own vanity and self-consciousness of unparalleled proportions, or whether I had judged truly, and had good reason for my qualms and anticipations.

It came. The alarm had not been a false one. Sir Peter, after conversing with me for a short time, did, in clear and unmistakable terms, inform me that he loved me, and asked me to marry him.

"I thank you," said I, mastering my impulse to cover my face with my hands, and run shuddering away from him. "I thank you for the honor you offer me, and beg to decline it."

He looked surprised, and still continued to urge me in a manner which roused a deep inner feeling of indignation within me, for it seemed to say that he understood me to be overwhelmed with the honor he proposed to confer upon me, and humored my timidity about accepting it. There was no doubt in his manner; not the shadow of a suspicion that I could be in earnest. There *was* something that turned my heart cold within me—a cool, sneering tone, which not all his professions of affection could disguise. Since that time I have heard Sir Peter explicitly state his conception of the sphere of woman in the world: it was not an exalted one. He could not even now quite conceal that while he *told* me he wished to make me his wife and the partner of his heart and possessions, yet he knew

that such professions were but words—that he did not sue for my love (poor Sir Peter! I doubt if ever in his long life he was blessed with even a momentary glimpse of the divine countenance of pure Love), but offered to buy my youth, and such poor beauty as I might have, with his money and his other worldly advantages.

Sir Peter was a blank, utter sceptic with regard to the worth of women. He did not believe in their virtue nor their self-respect; he believed them to be clever actresses, and, taken all in all, the best kind of amusement to be had for money. This kind of opinion was then new to me; the effect of it upon my mind such as might be expected. I was seventeen, and an ardent believer in all things pure and of good report.

Nevertheless, I remained composed, sedate, even courteous to the last—till I had fairly made Sir Peter understand that no earthly power should induce me to marry him; till I had let him see that I fully comprehended the advantages of the position he offered me, and declined them.

"Miss Wedderburn," said he at last—and his voice was as unruffled as my own; had it been more angry I should have feared it less—"do you fear opposition? I do not think your parents would refuse their consent to our union."

I closed my eyes for a moment, and a band seemed to tighten about my heart. Then I said:

"I speak without reference to my parents. In such a matter I judge for myself."

"Always the same answer?"

"Always the same, Sir Peter."

"It would be most ungentlemanly to press the subject any further." His eyes were fixed upon me with the same cold, snake-like smile. "I will not be guilty of such a solecism. Your family affections, my dear young lady, are strong, I should suppose. Which—whom do you love best?"

Surprised at the blunt straightforwardness of the question, as coming from *him*, I replied thoughtlessly, "Oh, my sister Adelaide."

"Indeed! I should imagine she was in every way worthy the esteem of so disinterested a person as yourself. A different disposition, though—quite. Will you allow me to touch your hand before I retire?"

Trembling with uneasy forebodings roused by his continual sneering smile, and the peculiar evil light in his eyes, I yet went through with my duty to the end. He took the hand I extended, and raised it to his lips with a low bow.

"Good-evening, Miss Wedderburn."

Faintly returning his valediction, I saw him go away, and then in a dream, a maze, a bewilderment, I too turned slowly away, and walked to the house again. I felt, I knew I had behaved well and discreetly, but I had no confidence whatever that the matter was at an end.





CHAPTER III

"Lucifer, Star of the Morning! How art thou fallen!"

I FOUND myself, without having met any one of my family, in my own room, in the semi-darkness, seated on a chair by my bedside, unnerved, faint, miserable with a misery such as I had never felt before. The window was open, and there came up a faint scent of sweet-briar and wall-flowers in soft, balmy gusts, driven into the room by the April night-wind. There rose a moon and flooded the earth with radiance. Then came a sound of footsteps; the door of the next room, that belonging to Adelaide, was opened. I heard her come in, strike a match, and light her candle; the click of the catch as the blind rolled down. There was a door between her room and mine, and presently she passed it, and bearing a candle in her hand, stood in my presence. My sister was very beautiful, very proud. She was cleverer, stronger, more decided than I,

or rather, while she had those qualities very strongly developed, I was almost without them. She always held her head up, and had one of those majestic figures which require no back-boards to teach them uprightness, no master of deportment to instil grace into their movements. Her toilette and mine were not, as may be supposed, of very rich materials or varied character; but while my things always looked as bad of their kind as they could—fitted badly, sat badly, were creased and crumpled—hers always had a look of freshness; she wore the merest old black merino as if it were velvet, and a muslin frill like a point-lace collar. There are such people in the world. I have always admired them, envied them, wondered at them from afar: it has never been my fate in the smallest degree to approach or emulate them.

Her pale face, with its perfect outlines, was just illumined by the candle she held, and the light also caught the crown of massive plaits which she wore around her head. She set the candle down. I sat still and looked at her.

"You are there, May," she remarked.

"Yes," was my subdued response.

"Where have you been all the evening?"

"It does not matter to any one."

"Indeed it does. You were talking to Sir Peter Le Marchant. I saw you meet him from my bedroom window."

"Did you?"

"Did he propose to you?" she inquired, with a com-

posure which seemed to me frightful. "Worldly," I thought, was a weak word to apply to her, and I was suffering acutely.

"He did."

"Well, I suppose it would be a little difficult to accept him?"

"I did not accept him."

"What?" she inquired, as if she had not quite caught what I said.

"I refused him," said I, slightly raising my voice.

"What are you telling me?"

"The truth."

"Sir Peter has fif——"

"Don't mention Sir Peter to me again," said I nervously, and feeling as if my heart would break. I had never quarrelled with Adelaide before. No reconciliation afterwards could ever make up for the anguish which I was going through now.

"Just listen to me," she said, bending over me, her lips drawn together. "I ought to have spoken to you before. I don't know whether you have ever given any thought to our position and circumstances. If not, it would be as well that you should do so now. Papa is fifty-five years old, and has three hundred a year. In the course of time he will die, and as his life is not insured, and he has regularly spent every penny of his income—naturally it would have been strange if he hadn't—what is to become of us when he is dead?"

"We can work."

"Work!" said she, with inexpressible scorn. "Work! Pray what can we do in the way of work? What kind of education have we had? The village schoolmistress could make us look very small in the matter of geography and history. We have not been trained to work, and, let me tell you, May, unskilled labor does not pay in these days."

"I am sure you can do anything, Adelaide, and I will teach singing. I *can* sing."

"Pooh! Do you suppose that because you can take C in alt, you are competent to teach singing? You don't know how to sing yourself yet. *Your face is your fortune.* So is mine my fortune. So is Stella's her fortune. You have enjoyed yourself all your life: you have had seventeen years of play and amusement, and now you behave like a baby. You refuse to endure a little discomfort, as the price of placing yourself and your family for ever out of the reach of trouble and trial. Why, if you were Sir Peter's wife, you could do what you liked with him. I don't say anything about myself; but oh! May, I am ashamed of you, I am ashamed of you! I thought you had more in you. Is it possible that you are nothing but a romp—nothing but a vulgar tomboy? Good heaven! If the chance had been mine!"

"What would you have done?" I whispered, subdued for the moment, but obstinate in my heart as ever.

"I am nobody now; no one knows me. But if I had had the chance that you have had to-night, in another year I would have been known and envied by half the women in

England. Bah! Circumstances are too disgusting, *too* unkind!"

"Oh! Adelaide, nothing could have made up for being tied to that man," said I in a small voice; "and I am not ambitious."

"Ambitious! You are selfish—downright, grossly, inordinately selfish. Do you suppose no one else ever had to do what they did not like? Why did you not stop to *think*, instead of rushing away from the thing like some unreasoning animal?"

"Adelaide! Sir Peter! To *marry* him!" I implored in tears. "How could I? I should die of shame at the very thought. Who could help seeing that I had sold myself to him?"

"And who would think any the worse of you? And what if they did? With fifteen thousand a year you may defy public opinion."

"Oh, don't! don't!" I cried, covering my face with my hands. "Adelaide, you will break my heart!"

Burying my face in the bed-quilt, I sobbed irrepressibly. Adelaide's apparent unconsciousness of, or callousness to, the stabs she was giving me, and the anguish they caused me almost distracted me.

She loosed my arm, remarking, with bitter vexation:

"I feel as if I could shake you!"

She left the room. I was left to my meditations. My head—my heart too—ached distractingly: my arm was sore where Adelaide had grasped it; I felt as if she had taken my mind by the shoulders and shaken it roughly. I

fastened both doors of my room, resolving that neither she nor any one else should penetrate to my presence again that night.

What was I to do? Where to turn? I began now to realize that the *Res domi*, which had always seemed to me so abundant for all occasions, were really *Res angustæ*, and that circumstances might occur in which they would be miserably inadequate.

CHAPTER IV

"Zu Rathe gehen, und vom Rath zur That."
Briefe BEETHOVEN'S.

THERE was surely not much in Miss Hallam to encourage confidences; yet, within half an hour of the time of entering her house, I had told her all that oppressed my heart, and had gained a feeling of greater security than I had yet felt. I was sure that she would befriend me. True, she did not say so. When I told her about Sir Peter Le Marchant's proposal to me, about Adelaide's behavior; when, in halting and stammering tones, and interrupted by tears, I confessed that I had not spoken to my father or mother upon the subject, and that I was not quite sure of their approval of what I had done, she even laughed a little, but not in what could be called an amused manner. When I had finished my tale, she said:

"If I understand you, the case stands thus: You have refused Sir Peter Le Marchant, but you do not feel at all sure that he will not propose to you again. Is it not so?"

"Yes," I admitted.

"And you dread and shrink from the idea of a repetition of this business?"

"I feel as if it would kill me."

"It would not kill you. People are not so easily killed as all that; but it is highly unfit that you should be subjected to a recurrence of it. I will think about it. Will you have the goodness to read me a page of this book?"

Much surprised at this very abrupt change of the subject, but not daring to make any observation upon it, I took the book—the current number of a magazine—and read a page to her.

"That will do," said she. "Now, will you read this letter, also aloud?"

She put a letter into my hand, and I read:

"'Dear Madam,

"'In answer to your letter of last week, I write to say that I could find the rooms you require, and that by me you will have many good agreements which would make your stay in Germany pleasanter. My house is a large one in the Alléestrasse. Dr. Mittendorf, the oculist, lives not far from here, and the *Städtische Augenklinik*—that is, the eye hospital—is quite near. The rooms you would have are upstairs—suite of salon and two bed-rooms, with room for your maid in another part of the house. I have other boarders here at the time, but you would do as you pleased about mixing with them.

"'With all highest esteem,

"'Your devoted,

"'Clara Steinmann.'"

"You don't understand it all, I suppose?" said she, when I had finished.

"No."

"That lady writes from Elberthal. You have heard of Elberthal on the Rhine, I presume?"

"Oh yes! A large town. There used to be a fine picture-gallery there; but in the war between the——"

"There, thank you! I studied Guy's Geography myself in my youth. I see you know the place I mean. There is an eye hospital there, and a celebrated oculist—Mittendorf. I am going there. I don't suppose it will be of the least use; but I am going. Drowning men catch at straws. Well, what else can you do? You don't read badly."

"I can sing—not very well, but I *can* sing."

"You can sing," said she reflectively. "Just go to the piano and let me hear a specimen. I was once a judge in these matters."

I opened the piano, and sang, as well as I could, an English version of "*Die Lotusblume*."

My performance was greeted with silence, which Miss Hallam at length broke, remarking:

"I suppose you have not had much training?"

"Scarcely any."

"Humph! Well, it is to be had, even if not in Skernford. Would you like some lessons?"

"I should like a good many things that I am not likely ever to have."

"At Elberthal there are all kinds of advantages with



regard to these things—music and singing, and so on. Will you come there with me as my companion ?"

I heard, but did not fairly understand. My head was in a whirl. Go to Germany with Miss Hallam ; leave Skernford, Sir Peter, all that had grown so weary to me ; see new places, live with new people ; learn something ! No, I did not grasp it in the least. I made no reply, but sat breathlessly staring.

"But I shall expect you to make yourself useful to me in many ways," proceeded Miss Hallam.

At this touch of reality I began to waken up again.

"Oh, Miss Hallam, is it really true ? Do you think they will let me go ?"

"You haven't answered me yet."

"About being useful ? I would do anything you like—anything in the world."

"Do not suppose your life will be all roses, or you will be woefully disappointed. I do not go out at all ; my health is bad—so is my temper very often. I am what people who never had any trouble are fond of calling *peculiar*. Still, if you are in earnest, and not merely sentimentalizing, you will take your courage in your hands and come with me."

"Miss Hallam," said I, with tragic earnestness, as I took her hand, "I will come. I see you half mistrust me ; but if I had to go to Siberia to get out of Sir Peter's way, I would go gladly and stay there. I hope I shall not be very clumsy. They say at home that I am, very, but I will do my best."

"They call you clumsy at home, do they?"

"Yes. My sisters are so much cleverer than I, and can do everything so much better than I can. I *am* rather stupid, I know."

"Very well, if you like to call yourself so, do. It is decided that you come with me. I will see your father about it to-morrow. I always get my own way when I wish it. I leave in about a week."

I sat with clasped hands, my heart so full that I could not speak. Sadness and gladness struggled hard within me. The idea of getting away from Skernford was almost too delightful; the remembrance of Adelaide made my heart ache.

CHAPTER V

"Ade nun, ihr Berge, du väterlich Haus!
Es treibt in die Ferne mich mächtig hinaus."

VOLKSLIED.

CONSENT was given. Sir Peter was not mentioned to me by my parents, or by Adelaide. The days of that week flew rapidly by.

I was almost afraid to mention my prospects to Adelaide. I feared she would resent my good fortune in going abroad, and that her anger at my having spoiled those other prospects would remain unabated. Moreover, a deeper feeling separated me from her now—the knowledge that there lay a great gulf of feeling, sentiment, opinion between us, which nothing could bridge over or do away with. Outwardly, we might be amiable and friendly to each other,

but confidence, union, was fled for ever. Once again in the future, I was destined, when our respective principles had been tried to the utmost, to have her confidence—to see her heart of hearts; but for the present we were effectually divided. I had mortally offended her, and it was not a case in which I could with decency, even, humble myself to her. Once, however, she mentioned the future.

When the day of our departure had been fixed, and was only two days distant: when I was breathless with hurried repairing of old clothes, and the equally hurried laying in of a small stock of new ones; while I was contemplating with awe the prospect of a first journey to London, to Ostend, to Brussels, she said to me, as I sat feverishly hemming a frill:

"So you are going to Germany?"

"Yes, Adelaide."

"What are you going to do there?"

"My duty, I hope."

"Charity, my dear, and duty too, begins at home. I should say you were going away leaving your duty undone."

I was silent, and she went on:

"I suppose you wish to go abroad, May?"

"You know I always *have* wished to go."

"So do I."

"I wish you were going too," said I timidly.

"Thank you. My views upon the subject are quite different. When *I* go abroad I shall go in a different capacity to that you are going to assume. I will let you know all about it in due time."

"Very well," said I, almost inaudibly, having a vague idea as to what she meant, but determined not to speak about it.

The following day the curtain rose upon the first act of the play—call it drama, comedy, tragedy, what you will—which was to be played in my absence. I had been up the village to the post-office, and was returning, when I saw advancing towards me two figures which I had cause to remember—my sister's queenly height; her white hat over her eyes, and her sunshade in her hand, and beside her the pale face, with its ragged eyebrows and hateful sneer, of Sir Peter Le Marchant.

Adelaide, not at all embarrassed by his company, was smiling slightly, and her eyes with drooped lids glanced downwards towards the Baronet. I shrank into a cottage to avoid them as they came past, and waited. Adelaide was saying:

"Proud—yes, I am proud, I suppose. Too proud, at least, to——"

There! Out of hearing. They had passed. I hurried out of the cottage, and home.

The next day I met Miss Hallam and her maid (we three travelled alone) at the station, and soon we were whirling smoothly along our southward way—to York first, then to London, and so out into the world, thought I.





BOOK II

LIFE

CHAPTER I

"Ein Held aus der Fremde, gar kühn."



We had left Brussels and Belgium behind, had departed from the regions of *Chemins de fer*, and entered those of *Eisenbahnen*. We were at Cologne, where we had to change, and wait half an hour before we could go on to Elberthal. We sat in the *Wartesaal*, and I had committed to my charge two bundles, with strict injunctions not to lose them.

Then the doors were opened, and the people made a mad rush to a train standing somewhere in the dim distance. Merrick, Miss Hallam's maid, had to give her whole and entire attention to her mistress. I followed close in their wake, until, as we had almost come to the train, I cast my eyes downwards and perceived that there was missing from my arm a gray shawl of Miss Hallam's, which had been committed to my charge, and upon which she set a fidgety kind of value, as being particularly warm or particularly soft.

Dismayed, I neither hesitated nor thought, but turned, fought my way through the throng of people to the waiting-room again, hunted every corner, but in vain, for the shawl. Either it was completely lost, or Merrick had, without my observing it, taken it under her own protection. It was not in the waiting-room. Giving up the search, I hurried to the door: it was fast. No one more, it would seem, was to be let out that way; I must go round, through the passages into the open hall of the station, and so on to the platform again. More easily said than done. Always, from my earliest youth up, I have had a peculiar faculty for losing myself. On this eventful day I lost myself. I ran through the passages, came into the great open place surrounded on every side by doors leading to platforms, offices, or booking-offices. Glancing hastily round, I selected that door which appeared to my imperfectly-developed "locality" to promise egress upon the platform, pushed it open, and going along a covered passage, and through another door, found myself, after the

loss of a good five minutes, in a lofty, deserted wing of the station, gazing wildly at an empty platform, and feverishly scanning all the long row of doors to my right, in a mad effort to guess which would take me from this delightful *terra incognita* back to my friends.

Gepäck-Expedition, I read, and thought it did not sound promising. *Telegraphenbureau*. Impossible! *Ausgang*. There was the magic word, and I, not knowing it, stared at it and was none the wiser for its friendly sign. I heard a hollow whistle in the distance. No doubt it was the Elberthal train going away, and my heart sank deep, deep within my breast. I knew no German word. All I could say was "Elberthal;" and my nearest approach to "first-class" was to point to the carriage doors and say "*Ein*," which might or might not be understood—probably not.

I heard a subdued bustle coming from the right hand in the distance, and I ran hastily to the other end of the great empty place, seeing, as I thought, an opening. Vain delusion! Deceptive dream of the fancy! There was a glass window through which I looked and saw a street thronged with passengers and vehicles. I hurried back again to find my way to the entrance of the station and there try another door, when I heard a bell ring violently—a loud groaning and shrieking, and then the sound, as it were, of a train departing.

A porter—at least, a person in uniform—appeared in a doorway. How I rushed up to him! How I seized his arm, and, dropping my rugs, gesticulated excitedly and panted forth the word, "Elberthal!"

"Elberthal?" said he in a guttural bass; "*Wollen Sie nach Elberthal, Fräuleinchen?*"

There was an impudent twinkle in his eye, as it were impertinence trying to get the better of beer, and I reiterated "Elberthal," growing very red, and cursing all foreign speeches by my gods—a process often employed, I believe, by cleverer persons than I, with reference to things they do not understand.

"*Schon fort, Fräulein,*" he continued, with a grin.

"But where—what—*Elberthal!*"

He was about to make some further reply, when, turning, he seemed to see some one, and assumed a more respectful demeanor. I too turned, and saw at some little distance from us a gentleman sauntering along, who, though coming towards us, did not seem to observe us. Would he understand me if I spoke to him? Desperate as I was, I felt some timidity about trying it. Never had I felt so miserable, so helpless, so utterly ashamed as I did then. My lips trembled as the new-comer drew nearer, and the porter, taking the opportunity of quitting a scene which began to bore him, slipped away. I was left alone on the platform, nervously snatching short glances at the person slowly, very slowly approaching me. He did not look up as if he beheld me or in any way remarked my presence. His eyes were bent towards the ground: his fingers drummed a tune upon his chest. As he approached, I heard that he was humming something. I even heard the air: it has been impressed upon my memory firmly enough since, though I did not know it then—the air of

the March from Raff's Fifth Symphony, the "Leonore." I heard the tune softly hummed in a mellow voice as, with face burning and glowing, I placed myself before him. Then he looked suddenly up, as if startled, fixed upon me a pair of eyes which gave me a kind of shock; so keen, so bright, so commanding were they, with a kind of tameless freedom in their glance such as I had never seen before.

Arrested (no doubt by my wild and excited appearance), he stood still and looked at me, and as he looked a slight smile began to dawn upon his lips. Not an Englishman. I should have known him for an outlander anywhere. I remarked no details of his appearance; only that he was tall and had, as it seemed to me, a commanding bearing. I stood hesitating and blushing. (To this very day the blood comes to my face as I think of my agony of blushes in that immemorial moment.) I saw a handsome—a very handsome face, quite different from any I had ever seen before: the startling eyes before spoken of, and which surveyed me with a look so keen, so cool, and so bright, which seemed to penetrate through and through me; while a slight smile curled the light moustache upwards—a general aspect which gave me the impression that he was not only a personage, but a very great personage—with a flavor of something else permeating it all which puzzled me and made me feel embarrassed as to how to address him. While I stood inanely, trying to gather my senses together, he took off the little cloth cap he wore, and bowing, asked:

"*Mein Fräulein*, in what can I assist you?"

His English was excellent—his bow like nothing I had

seen before. Convinced that I had met a genuine, thorough fine gentleman (in which I was right for *once* in my life), I began:

"I have lost my way," and my voice trembled in spite of all my efforts to steady it. "In the crowd I lost my friends, and—I was going to Elberthal, and I turned the wrong way—and ——"

"Have come to destruction, *nicht wahr?*" He looked at his watch, raised his eyebrows, and shrugged his shoulders. "The Elberthal train is already away."

"Gone!" I dropped my rugs and began a tremulous search for my pocket-handkerchief. "What *shall* I do?"

"There is another—let me see—in one hour—two—*will 'mal nachsehen*. Will you come with me, *Fräulein*, and we will see about the trains."

"If you would show me the platform," said I. "Perhaps some of them may still be there. Oh, what *will* they think of me?"

"We must go to the *Wartesaal*," said he. "Then you can look out and see if you see any of them."

I had no choice but to comply.

My benefactor picked up my two bundles, and, in spite of my expostulations, carried them with him. He took me through the door inscribed *Ausgang*, and the whole thing seemed so extremely simple now, that my astonishment as to *how* I could have lost myself increased every minute. He went before me to the waiting-room, put my bundles upon one of the sofas, and we went to the door. The platform was almost as empty as the one we had

left. I looked round, and though it was only what I had expected, yet my face fell when I saw how utterly and entirely my party had disappeared.

"You see them not?" he inquired.

"No—they are gone," said I, turning away from the window and choking down a sob, not very effectually. Turning my damp and sorrowful eyes to my companion, I found he was still smiling to himself as if quietly amused at the whole adventure.

"I'll go and see at what time the trains go to Elberthal. Suppose you sit down—yes?"

Passively obeying, I sat down and turned the situation over in my mind, in which kind of agreeable mental legerdemain I was still occupied when he returned.

"It is now half-past three, and there is a train to Elberthal at seven."

"*Seven!*"

"Seven: a very pleasant time to travel, *nicht wahr?* Then it is still quite light."

"So long! Three hours and a half," I murmured dejectedly, and bit my lips, and hung my head. Then I said, "I am sure I am much obliged to you. If I might ask you a favor?"

"*Bitte, mein Fräulein!*"

"If you could show me exactly where the train starts from,—and—could I get a ticket now, do you think?"

"I'm afraid not, so long before," he answered, twisting his moustache, as I could not help seeing, to hide a smile.

"Then," said I, with stoic calmness, "I shall never

get to Elberthal—*never*, for I don't know a word of German, not one." I sat more firmly down upon the sofa, and tried to contemplate the future with fortitude.

"I can tell you what to say," said he, removing with great deliberation the bundles which divided us, and sitting down beside me. He leaned his chin upon his hand, and looked at me, ever, as it seemed to me, with amusement tempered with kindness, and I felt like a very little girl indeed.

"You are exceedingly good," I replied, "but it would be of no use. I am so frightened of those men in blue coats and big moustaches. I should not be able to say a word to any of them."

"German is sometimes not unlike English."

"It is like nothing to me, except a great mystery."

"*Billet* is ticket," said he persuasively.

"Oh, is it?" said I, with a gleam of hope. "Perhaps I could remember that. *Billet*," I repeated reflectively.

"Bil*let*," he amended: "not *Bil*lit."

"Bill-*yet*—Bill-*yet*," I repeated.

"And 'to Elberthal' may be said in one word, 'Elberthal.' '*Ein Billet—Elberthal—erster Classe*.'"

"*Ein Bill-yet*," I repeated automatically, for my thoughts were dwelling more upon the charming quandary in which I found myself, than upon his half-good-natured, half-mocking instructions: "*Ein Bill-yet, first—erste*—it is of no use. I can't say it. But"—here a brilliant idea struck me—"if you would write it out for


AUSGA

me on a paper, and then I could give it the man: he would surely know what it meant."

"A very interesting idea, but a *vivâ voce* interview is so much better."

"I wonder how long it takes to *walk* to Elberthal!" I suggested darkly.

"Oh, a mere trifle of a walk. You might do it in four or five hours, I dare say."

I bit my lip, trying not to cry.

"Perhaps we might make some other arrangement," he remarked. "I am going to Elberthal too."

"You? Thank heaven!" was my first remark. Then as a doubt came over me: "Then why—why——"

Here I stuck fast, unable to ask why he had said so many tormenting things to me, pretended to teach me German phrases, and so on. The words would not come out.

Meanwhile he, without apparently feeling it necessary to explain himself upon these points, went on:

"Yes. I have been at a *Probe*" (not having the faintest idea as to what a *Probe* might be, and not liking to ask, I held my peace and bowed assentingly). He went on, "And I was delayed a little. I had intended to go by the train you have lost, so if you are not afraid to trust yourself to my care we can travel together."

"You—you are very kind."

"Then you are *not* afraid?"

"I—oh no! I should like it very much. I mean I am sure it would be very nice."

Feeling that my social powers were as yet in a very undeveloped condition, I subsided into silence, as he went on:

"I hope your friends will not be *very* uneasy?"

"Oh *dear* no!" I assured him, with a pious conviction that I was speaking the truth.

"We shall arrive at Elberthal about 8.30."

I scarcely heard. I had plunged my hand into my pocket, and found—a hideous conviction crossed my mind. *I had no money!* I had, until this moment, totally forgotten having given my purse to Merrick to keep; and she, as pioneer of the party, naturally had all our tickets under her charge.

My heart almost stopped beating. It was unheard of, horrible, this possibility of falling into the power of a total, utter stranger—a foreigner—a—heaven only knew what! Engrossed with this painful and distressing problem, I sat silent, and with eyes gloomily cast down.

"One thing is certain," he remarked. "We do not spend three hours and a half in the station. *I* want some dinner. A four hours' *Probe* is apt to make one a little hungry. Come, we will go and have something to eat."

The idea had evidently come to him as a species of inspiration, and he openly rejoiced in it.

"I am not hungry," said I; but I was, very. I knew it now that the idea "dinner" had made itself conspicuous in my consciousness.

"Perhaps you think not; but you are, all the same,"

he said. "Come with me, *Fräulein*. You have put yourself into my hands; you must do what I tell you."

I followed him mechanically out of the station and down the street, and I tried to realize that instead of being with Miss Hallam and Merrick, my natural and respectable protectors, safely and conventionally plodding the slow way in the slow continental train to the slow continental town, I was parading about the streets of Köln with a man of whose very existence I had half an hour ago been ignorant; I was dependent, too, upon him, and him alone, for my safe arrival at Elberthal. And I followed him unquestioningly, now and then telling myself, by way of feeble consolation, that he was a gentleman—he certainly was a gentleman—and wishing now and then, or trying to wish, with my usual proper feeling, that it had been some nice old lady with whom I had fallen in: it would have made the whole adventure blameless, and, comparatively speaking, agreeable.

We went along a street, and came to an hotel, a large building, into which my conductor walked, spoke to a waiter, and we were shown into the restaurant, full of round tables, and containing some half-dozen parties of people. I followed with stony resignation. It was the severest trial of all, this coming to an hotel alone with a gentleman in broad daylight. I caught sight of a reflection in the mirror of a tall, pale girl, with heavy, tumbled auburn hair, a brown hat which suited her, and a severely simple travelling-dress. I did not realize until I had gone past that it was my own reflection which I had seen.

"Suppose we sit here," said he, going to a table in a comparatively secluded window-recess, partially overhung with curtains.

"How very kind and considerate of him!" thought I.

"Would you rather have wine or coffee, *Fräulein?*"

Pulled up from the impulse to satisfy my really keen hunger by the recollection of my "lack of gold," I answered hastily:

"Nothing, thank you—really nothing."

"Oh, *doch!* You must have something," said he, smiling. "I will order something. Don't trouble about it."

"Don't order anything for me," said I, my cheeks burning again. "I shall not eat anything."

"If you do not eat, you will be ill. Remember, we do not get to Elberthal before eight," said he. "Is it perhaps disagreeable to you to eat in the saal? If you like we can have a private room."

"It is not that at all," I replied; and seeing that he looked surprised, I blurted out the truth. "I have no money. I gave my purse to Miss Hallam's maid to keep, and she has taken it with her."

With a laugh, in which, infectious though it was, I was too wretched to join:

"Is that all? *Kellner!*" cried he.

An obsequious waiter came up, smiled sweetly and meaningly at us, received some orders from my companion, and disappeared.

He seated himself beside me at the little round table.

"He will bring something at once," said he, smiling.

I sat still. I was not happy, and yet I could not feel all the unhappiness which I considered appropriate to the circumstances.

My companion took up a *Kölnische Zeitung*, and glanced over the advertisements, while I looked a little stealthily at him, and for the first time took in more exactly what he was like, and grew more puzzled with him each moment. As he leaned upon the table, one slight, long, brown hand propping his head, and half lost in the thick, fine brown hair, which waved in large, ample waves over his head, there was an indescribable grace, ease, and negligent beauty in the attitude. Move as he would, let him assume any possible or impossible attitude, there was still the same grace, half careless, yet very dignified, in the position he took.

All his lines were lines of beauty, but beauty which had power and much masculine strength; nowhere did it degenerate into flaccidity, nowhere lose strength in grace. His hair was long, and I wondered at it. My small experience in our delightful home and village circle had not acquainted me with that flowing style; the young men of my acquaintance cropped their hair close to the scalp, and called it the modern style of hair-dressing. It had always looked to me more like hair-undressing. This hair fell in a heavy wave over his forehead, and he had the habit, common to people whose hair does so, of lifting his head suddenly and shaking back the offending lock. His forehead was broad, open, pleasant, yet grave. Eyes, as I had seen, very dark, and with lashes and brows which

enhanced the contrast to a complexion at once fair and pale. A light moustache, curving almost straight across the face, gave a smiling expression to lips which were otherwise grave, calm, almost sad. In fact, looking nearer, I thought he did look sad; and though when he looked at me his eyes were so piercing, yet in repose they had a certain distant, abstracted expression, not far removed from absolute mournfulness. Broad-shouldered, long-armed, with a *physique* in every respect splendid, he was yet very distinctly removed from the mere handsome animal which I believe enjoys a distinguished popularity in the latter-day romance.

Now, as his eyes were cast upon the paper, I perceived lines upon his forehead, signs about the mouth telling of a firm, not to say imperious disposition; a certain curve of the lips, and of the full, yet delicate nostril, told of pride both strong and high. He was older than I had thought, his face sparer; there were certain hollows in the cheeks, two lines between the eyebrows, a sharpness, or rather somewhat worn appearance of the features, which told of a mental life, keen and consuming. Altogether, an older, more intellectual, more imposing face than I had at first thought: less that of a young and handsome man, more that of a thinker and student. Lastly, a cool ease, deliberation, and leisureliness about all he said and did, hinted at his being a person in authority, accustomed to give orders and see them obeyed without question. I decided that he was, in our graceful home phrase, "master in his own house."

His clothing was unremarkable—gray summer clothes, such as any gentleman or any shopkeeper might wear; only in scanning him no thought of shopkeeper came into my mind. His cap lay upon the table beside us, one of the little gray *Studentenhüte* with which Elberthal soon made me familiar, but which struck me then as odd and outlandish. I grew every moment more interested in my scrutiny of this, to me, fascinating and remarkable face, and had forgotten to try to look as if I were not looking, when he glanced up suddenly, without warning, with those bright, formidable eyes, which had already made me feel somewhat shy as I caught them fixed upon me.

"*Nun*, have you decided?" he asked, with a humorous look in his eyes, which he was too polite to allow to develop itself into a smile.

"I—oh, I beg your pardon!"

"You do not want to," he answered, in imperfect idiom. "But *have* you decided?"

"Decided what?"

"Whether I am to be trusted?"

"I have not been thinking about that," I said uncomfortably, when to my relief the appearance of the waiter with preparations for a meal saved me further reply.

"What shall we call this meal?" he asked, as the waiter disappeared to bring the repast to the table. "It is too late for the *Mittagessen*, and too early for the *Abendbrod*. Can you suggest a name?"

"At home, it would be just the time for afternoon tea."

"Ah, yes! Your English afternoon tea is very——" He stopped suddenly.

"Have you been in England?"

"This is just the time at which we drink our afternoon coffee in Germany," said he, looking at me with his impenetrably bright eyes, just as if he had never heard me. "When the ladies all meet together to talk scan—*Oh, behüte!* what am I saying?—to consult seriously upon important topics, you know. There are some low-minded persons who call the whole ceremony a *Klatsch—Kaffeeklatsch*. I am sure you and I shall talk seriously upon important subjects, so suppose we call this our *Kaffeeklatsch*, although we have no coffee to it."

"Oh yes, if you like."

He put a piece of cutlet upon my plate, and poured yellow wine into my glass. Endeavoring to conduct myself with the dignity of a grown-up person and to show that I did know something, I inquired if the wine were hock.

He smiled.

"It is not Hochheimer—not Rheinwein at all—he—no, it you say—it is Moselle wine—'Doctor.'"

"Doctor?"

"*Doctorberger;* I do not know why so called. And a very good fellow too—so say all his friends, of whom I am a warm one. Try him."

I complied with the admonition, and was able to say that I liked *Doctorberger*. We ate and drank in silence for some little time, and I found that I was very hungry. I also found that I could not conjure up any real feeling

of discomfort or uneasiness, and that the prospective scolding from Miss Hallam had no terrors in it for me. Never had I felt so serene in mind, never more at ease in every way, than now. I felt that this was wrong—Bohemian, irregular, and not respectable, and tried to get up a little unhappiness about something. The only thing that I could think of was:

"I am afraid I am taking up your time. Perhaps you had some business which you were going to when you met me."

"My business, when I met you, was to catch the train to Elberthal, which was already gone, as *you* know. I shall not be able to fulfil my engagements for to-night, so it really does not matter. I am enjoying myself very much."

"I am very glad I did meet you," said I, growing more reassured as I found that my companion, though exceedingly polite and attentive to me, did not ask a question as to my business, my travelling companions, my intended stay or object in Elberthal—that he behaved as a perfect gentleman—one who is a gentleman throughout, in thought as well as in deed. He did not even ask me how it was that my friends had not waited a little for me, though he must have wondered why two people left a young girl, moneyless and ignorant, to find her way after them as well as she could. He took me as he found me, and treated me as if I had been the most distinguished and important of persons. But at my last remark he said, with the same odd smile which took me by surprise every time I saw it:

"The pleasure is certainly not all on your side, *mein Fräulein*. I suppose from that you have decided that I *am* to be trusted?"

I stammered out something to the effect that "I should be very ungrateful were I not satisfied with—with such a ——" I stopped, looking at him in some confusion. I saw a sudden look flash into his eyes and over his face. It was gone again in a moment—so fleeting that I had scarce time to mark it, but it opened up a crowd of strange, new impressions to me, and while I could no more have said what it was like the moment it was gone, yet it left two desires almost equally strong in me—I wished in one and the same moment that I had for my own peace of mind never seen him—and that I might never lose sight of him again: to fly from that look, to remain and encounter it. The tell-tale mirror in the corner caught my eye. At home they used sometimes to call me, partly in mockery, partly in earnest, "Bonny May." The sobriquet had hitherto been a mere shadow, a meaningless thing, to me. I liked to hear it, but had never paused to consider whether it were appropriate or not. In my brief intercourse with my venerable suitor, Sir Peter, I had come a little nearer to being actively aware that I was good-looking, only to anathematize the fact. Now, catching sight of my reflection in the mirror, I wondered eagerly whether I really were fair, and wished I had some higher authority to think so, than the casual jokes of my sisters. It did not add to my presence of mind to find that my involuntary glance to the mirror had been intercepted—perhaps

even my motive guessed at—he appeared to have a frightfully keen instinct.

"Have you seen the Dom?" was all he *said;* but it seemed somehow to give a point to what had passed.

"The Dom—what is the Dom?"

"The *Kölner Dom;* the cathedral."

"Oh no! Oh, should we have time to see it?" I exclaimed. "How I *should* like it!"

"Certainly. It is close at hand. Suppose we go now."

Gladly I rose, as he did. One of my most ardent desires was about to be fulfilled—not so properly and correctly as might have been desired, but—yes, certainly more pleasantly than under the escort of Miss Hallam, grumbling at every groschen she had to unearth in payment.

Before we could leave our seclusion there came up to us a young man who had looked at us through the door and paused. I had seen him; had seen how he said something to a companion, and how the companion shook his head dissentingly. The first speaker came up to us, eyed me with a look of curiosity, and turning to my protector with a benevolent smile, said:

"Eugen Courvoisier! *Also hatte ich doch Recht!*"

I caught the name. The rest was of course lost upon me. Eugen Courvoisier? I liked it, as I liked him, and in my young enthusiasm decided that it was a very good name. The new comer, who seemed as if much pleased with some discovery, and entertained at the same time, addressed some questions to Courvoisier, who answered

him tranquilly but in a tone of voice which was very freezing; and then the other, with a few words, and an unbelieving kind of laugh, said something about a *schöne Geschichte*, and, with another look at me, went out of the coffee-room again.

We went out of the hotel, up the street to the cathedral. It was the first cathedral I had ever been in. The shock and the wonder of its grandeur took my breath away. When I had found courage to look round, and up at those awful vaults the roofs, I could not help crying a little. The vastness, coolness, stillness and splendor crushed me —the great solemn rays of sunlight coming in slanting glory through the windows—the huge height—the impression it gave of greatness, and of a religious devotion to which we shall never again attain; of pure, noble hearts, and patient, skilful hands, toiling, but in a spirit that made the toil a holy prayer—carrying out the builder's thought—great thought greatly executed—all was too much for me, the more so in that while I *felt* it all I could not analyze it. It was a dim, indefinite wonder. I tried stealthily and in shame to conceal my tears, looking surreptitiously at him in fear lest he should be laughing at me again. But he was not. He held his cap in his hand —was looking with those strange, brilliant eyes fixedly towards the high altar, and there was some expression upon his face which I could not analyze—not the expression of a person for whom such a scene has grown or can grow common by custom—not the expression of a sight-seer who feels that he must admire; not my own first astonishment.

At least he felt it—the whole grand scene, and I instinctively and instantly felt more at home with him than I had done before.

"Oh!" said I at last, "if one could stay here for ever, what would one grow to?"

He smiled a little.

"You find it beautiful?"

"It is the first I have seen. It is much more than beautiful."

"The first you have seen! Ah, well, I might have guessed that."

"Why? do I look so countrified?" I inquired, with real interest, as I let him lead me to a little side-bench, and place himself beside me. I asked in all good faith. About him there seemed such a cosmopolitan ease, that I felt sure he could tell me correctly how I struck other people—if he would.

"Countrified—what is that?"

"Oh, we say it when people are like me—have never seen anything but their own little village, and never had any adventures, and——"

"Get lost at railway stations, *und so weiter*. I don't know enough of the meaning of 'countrified' to be able to say if you are so, but it is easy to see that you—have not had much contention with the powers that be."

"Oh, I shall not be stupid long," said I comfortably. "I am not going back home again."

"So!" He did not ask more, but I saw that he listened, and proceeded communicatively.

"Never. I have—not quarrelled with them exactly, but had a disagreement, because—because——"

"Because?"

"They wanted me to—I mean, an old gentleman—no, I mean——"

"An old gentleman wanted you to marry him, and you would not," said he, with an odd twinkle in his eyes.

"Why, how *can* you know?"

"I think, because you told me. But I will forget it if you wish."

"Oh no! It is quite true. Perhaps I *ought* to have married him."

"*Ought!*" He looked startled.

"Yes. Adelaide—my eldest sister—said so. But it was no use. I was very unhappy, and Miss Hallam, who is Sir Peter's deadly enemy—he is the old gentleman, you know—was very kind to me. She invited me to come with her to Germany, and promised to let me have singing lessons."

"Singing lessons?"

I nodded. "Yes; and then when I know a good deal more about singing, I shall go back again and give lessons. I shall support myself, and then no one will have the right to want to make me marry Sir Peter."

"*Du lieber Himmel!*" he ejaculated, half to himself. "Are you very musical, then?"

"I can sing," said I. "Only I want some more training."

"And you will go back all alone and try to give lessons?"

"I shall not only *try*, I shall do it." I corrected him.

"And do you like the prospect?"

"If I can get enough money to live upon, I shall like it very much. It will be better than living at home and being bothered."

"I will tell you what you should do before you begin your career," said he, looking at me with an expression half wondering, half pitying.

"What? If you could tell me anything."

"Preserve your voice, by all means, and get as much instruction as you can; but change all that waving hair, and make it into unobjectionable smooth bands of no particular color. Get a mask to wear over your face, which is too expressive; do something to your eyes to alter their——"

The expression then visible in the said eyes seemed to strike him, for he suddenly stopped, and with a slight laugh, said:

"*Ach was rede ich für dummes Zeug!* Excuse me, *mein Fräulein*."

"But," I interrupted earnestly, "what do you mean? Do you think my appearance will be a disadvantage to me?"

Scarcely had I said the words than I knew how intensely stupid they were, how very much they must appear as if I were openly and impudently fishing for compliments. How grateful I felt when he answered, with a grave directness, which had nothing but the highest compliment in it—that of crediting me with right motives:

"*Mein Fräulein*, how can I tell? It is only that I knew some one, rather older than you, and very beautiful,

who had such a pursuit. Her name was Corona Heidelberger, and her story was a sad one."

"Tell it me," I besought.

"Well, no, I think not. But—sometimes I have a little gift of foresight, and that tells me that you will not become what you at present think. You will be much happier and more fortunate."

"I wonder if it would be nice to be a great operatic singer," I speculated.

"*Oh, behute!* don't think of it!" he exclaimed, starting up and moving restlessly. "You do not know—*you* an opera singer——"

He was interrupted. There suddenly filled the air a sound of deep, heavenly melody, which swept solemnly adown the aisles, and filled with its melodious thunder every corner of the great building. I listened with my face upraised, my lips parted. It was the organ, and presently, after a wonderful melody, which set my heart beating—a melody full of the most witchingly sweet high notes, and a breadth and grandeur of low ones such as only two composers have ever attained to, a voice—a single woman's voice—was upraised. She was invisible, and she sang till the very sunshine seemed turned to melody, and all the world was music—the greatest, most glorious of earthly things.

"Blute nur, liebes Herz!
Ach, ein Kind, das du erzogen,
Das an deiner Brust gesogen,
Drohet den Pfleger zu ermorden,
Denn es ist zur Schlange worden.'

"What is it?" I asked below my breath, as it ceased.

He had shaded his face with his hand, but turned to me as I spoke, a certain half-suppressed enthusiasm in his eyes.

"Be thankful for your first introduction to German music," said he, "and that it was grand old Johann Sebastian Bach whom you heard. That is one of the soprano solos in the *Passionsmusik*—that *is* music."

There was more music. A tenor voice was singing a recitative now, and that exquisite accompaniment, with a sort of joyful solemnity, still continued. Every now and then, shrill, high, and clear, penetrated a chorus of boys' voices. I, outer barbarian that I was, barely knew the name of Bach and his *Matthäus Passion*, so in the pauses my companion told me by snatches what it was about. There was not much of it. After a few solos and recitatives, they tried one or two of the choruses. I sat in silence, feeling a new world breaking in glory around me, till that tremendous chorus came; the organ notes swelled out, the tenor voice sang, "Whom will ye that I give unto you?" and the answer came, crashing down in one tremendous clap, "Barrabam!" And such music was in the world, had been sung for years, and I had not heard it. Verily, there may be revelations and things new under the sun every day.

I had forgotten everything outside the cathedral—every person but the one at my side. It was he who roused first, looking at his watch and exclaiming:

"*Herrgott!* We must go to the station, *Fräulein*, if we wish to catch the train."

And yet I did not think he seemed very eager to catch it, as we went through the busy streets in the warmth of evening, for it was hot, as it sometimes is in pleasant April, before the withering east winds of the "merry month" have come to devastate the land, and sweep sickly people off the face of the earth. We went slowly through the moving crowds to the station, into the *Wartesaal*, where he left me while he went to take my ticket. I sat in the same corner of the same sofa as before, and to this day I could enumerate every object in that *Wartesaal*.

It was after seven o'clock. The outside sky was still bright, but it was dusk in the waiting-room and under the shadow of the station. When "Eugen Courvoisier" came in again, I did not see his features so distinctly as lately in the cathedral. Again he sat down beside me, silently this time. I glanced at his face, and a strange, sharp, pungent thrill shot through me. The companion of a few hours—was he only that?

"Are you very tired?" he asked gently, after a long pause. "I think the train will not be very long now."

Even as he spoke, clang, clang, went the bell, and for the second time that day I went towards the train for Elberthal. This time no wrong turning, no mistake. Courvoisier put me into an empty compartment, and followed me, said something to a guard who went past, of which I could only distinguish the word *allein;* but as no one disturbed our privacy, I concluded that German railway guards, like English ones, are mortal.

After debating within myself for some time, I screwed up my courage and began:

"Mr. Courvoisier—your name is Courvoisier, is it not?"

"Yes."

"Will you please tell me how much money you have spent for me to-day?"

"How much money?" he asked, looking at me with a provoking smile.

The train was rumbling slowly along, the night darkening down. We sat by an open window, and I looked through it at the gray, Dutch-like landscape, the falling dusk, the poplars that seemed sedately marching along with us.

"Why do you want to know how much?" he demanded.

"Because I shall want to pay you, of course, when I get my purse," said I. "And if you will kindly tell me your address, too—but how much money did you spend?"

He looked at me, seemed about to laugh off the question, and then said:

"I *believe* it was about three thaler ten groschen, but I am not at all sure. I cannot tell till I do my accounts."

"Oh dear!" said I.

"Suppose I let you know how much it was," he went on, with a gravity which forced conviction upon me.

"Perhaps that would be the best," I agreed. "But I hope you will make out your accounts soon."

"Oh, very soon. And where shall I send my bill to?"

Feeling as if there were something not *quite* as it should

be in the whole proceeding, I looked very earnestly at him, but could find nothing but the most perfect gravity in his expression. I repeated my address and name slowly and distinctly, as befitted so business-like a transaction, and he wrote them down in a little book.

"And you will not forget," said I, "to give me your address when you let me know what I owe you."

"Certainly—when I let you know what you owe me," he replied, putting the little book into his pocket again.

"I wonder if any one will come to meet me," I speculated, my mind more at ease in consequence of the business-like demeanor of my companion.

"Possibly," said he, with an ambiguous half smile, which I did not understand.

"Miss Hallam—the lady I came with—is almost blind. Her maid had to look after her, and I suppose that is why they did not wait for me," said I.

"It must have been a very strong reason, at any rate," he said gravely.

Now the train rolled into the Elberthal station. There were lights, movement, a storm of people all gabbling away in a foreign tongue. I looked out. No face of any one I knew. Courvoisier sprang down and helped me out.

"Now I will put you into a *Droschke*," said he, leading the way to where they stood outside the station.

"Alléestrasse thirty-nine," he said to the man.

"Stop one moment," cried I, leaning eagerly out. At that moment a tall, dark girl passed us, going slowly towards the gates. She almost paused as she saw us. She

was looking at my companion; I did not see her face, and was only conscious of her as coming between me and him, and so annoying me.

"Please let me thank you," I continued. "You have been so kind, so very kind——"

"Oh, *bitte sehr!* It was so kind in you to get lost exactly when and where you did," said he, smiling. "*Adieu, mein Fräulein*," he added, making a sign to the coachman, who drove off.

I saw him no more. "Eugen Courvoisier"—I kept repeating the name to myself, as if I were in the very least danger of forgetting it—"Eugen Courvoisier."—Now that I had parted from him I was quite clear as to my own feelings. I would have given all I was worth—not much, truly—to see him for one moment again.

Along a lighted street with houses on one side, a gleaming shine of water on the other, and trees on both, down a cross way, then into another street, very wide, and gayly lighted, in the midst of which was an avenue.

We stopped with a rattle before a house door, and I read, by the light of the lamp that hung over it, "39."



CHAPTER II

Anna Sartorius

I WAS expected. That was very evident. An excited-looking *Dienstmädchen* opened the door, and on seeing me, greeted me as if I had been an old friend. I was presently rescued by Merrick, also looking agitated.

"Ho, Miss Wedderburn, at last you are here! How Miss Hallam *have* worried, to be sure."

"I could not help it, I'm very sorry," said I, following her upstairs—up a great many flights of stairs, as it seemed to me, till she ushered me into a sitting-room, where I found Miss Hallam.

"Thank heaven, child! you are here at last. I was beginning to think that if you did not come by this train, I must send some one to Köln to look after you."

"By *this* train!" I repeated blankly. "Miss Hallam —what—do you mean? There has been no other train."

"Two: there was one at four and one at six. I cannot tell you how uneasy I have been at your non-appearance."

"Then—then—" I stammered, growing hot all over. "Oh, how *horrible!*"

"What is horrible?" she demanded. "And you must be starving. Merrick, go and see about something to eat for Miss Wedderburn. Now," she added as her maid left the room, "tell me what you have been doing."

I told her everything, concealing nothing.

"Most annoying!" she remarked. "A gentleman,

you say. My dear child, no gentleman would have done anything of the kind. I am very sorry for it all."

"Miss Hallam," I implored, almost in tears, "please do not tell any one what has happened to me. I will never be such a fool again. I know now—and you may trust me. But *do* not let any one know how *stupid* I have been. I told you I was stupid—I told you several times. I am sure you must remember."

"Oh yes, I remember. We will say no more about it."

"And the gray shawl?" said I.

"Merrick had it."

I lifted my hands and shrugged my shoulders. "Just my luck," I murmured resignedly, as Merrick came in with a tray.

Miss Hallam, I noticed, continued to regard me now and then, as I ate with but small appetite. I was too excited by what had passed, and by what I had just heard, to be hungry. I thought it kind, merciful, humane in her to promise to keep my secret and not expose my ignorance and stupidity to strangers.

"It is evident," she remarked, "that you must at once begin to learn German, and then if you do get lost at a railway-station again, you will be able to ask your way."

Merrick shook her head with an inexpressibly bitter smile.

"I'd defy any one to learn *this* 'ere language, ma'am. They call an accident a *Unglück:* if any one could tell me what *that* means, I'd thank them, that's all."

"Don't express your opinions, Merrick, unless you wish to seem deficient in understanding; but go and see that

Miss Wedderburn has everything she wants—or rather everything that can be *got*—in her room. She is tired, and shall go to bed."

I was only too glad to comply with this mandate, but it was long ere I slept. I kept hearing the organ in the cathedral, and that voice of the invisible singer—seeing the face beside me, and hearing the words, "Then you have decided that I *am* to be trusted?"

"And he was deceiving me all the time!" I thought mournfully.

I breakfasted by myself the following morning, in a room called the *Speisesaal*. I found I was late. When I came into the room, about nine o'clock, there was no one but myself to be seen. There was a long table with a white cloth upon it, and rows of the thickest cups and saucers it had ever been my fate to see, with distinct evidences that the chief part of the company had already breakfasted.

Baskets full of *Brödchen* and pots of butter, a long india-rubber pipe coming from the gas to light a *Theemaschine*—lots of cane-bottomed chairs, an open piano, two cages with canaries in them; the kettle gently simmering above the gas-flame; for the rest, silence and solitude.

I sat down, having found a clean cup and plate, and glanced timidly at the *Theemaschine*, not daring to cope with its mysteries, until my doubts were relieved by the entrance of a young person with a trim little figure, a coquettishly cut and elaborately braided apron, and a white frilled *Morgenhaube* upon her hair, surmounting her round, heavenward-aspiring visage.

"*Guten Morgen, Fräulein,*" she said, as she marched up to the darkly mysterious *Theemaschine* and began deftly to prepare coffee for me, and to push the *Brödchen* towards me. She began to talk to me in broken English, which was very pretty, and while I ate and drank, she industriously scraped little white roots at the same table. She told me she was Clara, the niece of Frau Steinmann, and that she was very glad to see me, but was very sorry I had had so long to wait in Köln, yesterday. She liked my dress, and was it *echt Englisch*—also, how much did it cost?

She was a cheery little person, and I liked her. She seemed to like me too, and repeatedly said she was glad I had come. She liked dancing, she said. Did I? And she had lately danced at a ball with some one who danced so well—*aber*, quite indescribably well. His name was Karl Linders, and he was, ach! really a remarkable person. A bright blush, and a little sigh, accompanied the remark. Our eyes met, and from that moment Clara and I were very good friends.

I went upstairs again, and found that Miss Hallam proposed, during the forenoon, to go and find the Eye Hospital, where she was to see the oculist, and arrange for him to visit her, and shortly after eleven we set out.

The street that I had so dimly seen the night before, showed itself by daylight to be a fair, broad way. Down the middle, after the pleasant fashion of continental towns, was a broad walk, planted with two double-rows of linden, and on either side this Lindenallée was the carriage road, private houses, shops, exhibitions, boarding-houses. In the

middle, exactly opposite our dwelling, was the New Theatre, just drawing to the close of its first season. I looked at it without thinking much about it. I had never been in a theatre in my life, and the name was but a name to me.

Turning off from the pretty allée, and from the green *Hofgarten* which bounded it at one end, we entered a narrow, ill-paved street, the aspect of whose gutters and inhabitants alike excited my liveliest disgust. In this street was the Eye Hospital, as was presently testified to us by a board bearing the inscription, *Städtische Augenklinik*.

We were taken to a dimly-lighted room in which many people were waiting, some with bandages over their eyes, others with all kinds of extraordinary spectacles on, which made them look like phantoms out of a bad dream—nearly all more or less blind, and the effect was surprisingly depressing.

Presently Miss Hallam and Merrick were admitted to an inner room, and I was left to await their return. My eye strayed over the different faces, and I felt a sensation of relief when I saw some one come in without either bandage or spectacles. The new comer was a young man of middle height, and of proportions slight without being thin. There was nothing the matter with *his* eyes, unless perhaps a slight shortsightedness: he had, I thought, one of the gentlest, most attractive faces I had ever seen; boyishly open and innocent at the first glance; at the second, endued with a certain reticent calm and intellectual radiance which took away from the first youthfulness of his appearance. Soft, yet luminous brown eyes, loose

brown hair hanging round his face, a certain manner which for me at least had a charm, were the characteristics of this young man. He carried a violin-case, removed his hat as he came in, and being seen by one of the young men who sat at desks, took names down, and attended to people in general, was called by him:

"Herr Helfen—Herr Friedhelm Helfen!"

"*Ja—hier!*" he answered, going up to the desk, upon which there ensued a lively conversation, though carried on in a low tone, after which the young man at the desk presented a white card to "Herr Friedhelm Helfen," and the latter, with a pleasant "adieu," went out of the room again.

Miss Hallam and Merrick presently returned from the consulting-room, and we went out of the dark room into the street, which was filled with spring sunshine and warmth: a contrast something like that between Miss Hallam's life and my own, I have thought since. Far before us, hurrying on, I saw the young man with the violin-case: he turned off by the theatre, and went in at a side door.

An hour's wandering in the *Hofgarten*—my first view of the Rhine—a dull, flat stream it looked, too. I have seen it since then in mightier flow. Then we came home, and it was decided that we should dine together with the rest of the company at one o'clock.

A bell rang at a few minutes past one. We went downstairs, into the room in which I had already breakfasted, which, in general, was known as the *Saal*. As I entered with Miss Hallam, I was conscious that a knot of lads or

young men stood aside to let us pass, and then giggled and scuffled behind the door before following us into the Saal.

Two or three ladies were already seated, and an exceedingly stout lady ladled out soup at a side table, while Clara and a servant-woman carried the plates round to the different places. The stout lady turned as she saw us, and greeted us. She was Frau Steinmann, our hostess. She waited until the youths before spoken of had come in, and with a great deal of noise had seated themselves, when she began, aided by the soup-ladle, to introduce us all to each other.

We, it seemed, were to have the honor and privilege of being the only English ladies of the company. We were



introduced to one or two others, and I was assigned a place by a lady introduced as Fräulein Anna Sartorius, a brunette, rather stout, with large dark eyes which looked

at me in a way I did not like, a head of curly black hair cropped short, an odd brusque manner, and a something peculiar or, as she said, *seltsam* in her dress. This young lady sustained the introduction with self-possession and calm. It was otherwise with the young gentlemen, who appeared decidedly mixed. There were some half-dozen of them in all—a couple of English, the rest German, Dutch, and Swedish. I had never been in company with so many nationalities before, and was impressed with my situation—needlessly so.

All these young gentlemen made bows which were, in their respective ways, triumphs of awkwardness, with the exception of one of our compatriots, who appeared to believe that himself and his manners were formed to charm and subdue the opposite sex. We then sat down, and Fräulein Sartorius immediately opened a conversation with me.

"*Sprechen Sie Deutsch, Fräulein?*" was her first venture, and having received my admission that I did *not* speak a word of it, she continued in good English:

"Now I can talk to you without offending you. It is so dreadful when English people who don't know German persist in thinking that they do. There *was* an Englishwoman here who always said *wer* when she meant where, and *wo* when she meant who. She said the sounds confused her."

The boys giggled at this, but the joke was lost upon me.

"What is your name?" she continued; "I didn't catch what Frau Steinmann said."

"May Wedderburn," I replied, angry with myself for

blushing so excessively as I saw that all the boys held their spoons suspended, listening for my answer.

"May—*das heisst Mai*," said she, turning to the assembled youths, who testified that they were aware of it, and the Dutch boy, Brinks, inquired gutturally:

"You haf one zong in your language what calls itself 'Not always Mai,' haf you not?"

"Yes," said I, and all the boys began to giggle as if something clever had been said. Taken all in all, what tortures have I not suffered from those dreadful boys! Shy when they ought to have been bold, and bold where a modest retiringness would better have become them. Giggling inanely at everything and nothing. Noisy and vociferous amongst themselves or with inferiors; shy, awkward, and blushing with ladies or in refined society—distressing my feeble efforts to talk to them by their silly explosions of laughter when one of them was addressed. They formed the bane of my life for some time.

"Will you let me paint you?" said Fräulein Sartorius, whose big eyes had been surveying me in a manner that made me nervous.

"Paint me?"

"Your likeness, I mean. You are very pretty, and we never see that color of hair here."

"Are you a painter?"

"No, I'm only a *Studentin* yet; but I paint from models. Well, will you sit to me?"

"Oh, I don't know. If I have time, perhaps."

"What will you do to make you not have time?"

I did not feel disposed to gratify her curiosity, and said I did not know yet what I should do.

For a short time she asked no more questions, then:

"Do you like town or country best?"

"I don't know. I have never lived in a town."

"Do you like amusements—concerts, and theatre, and opera?"

"I don't know," I was reluctantly obliged to confess, for I saw that the assembled youths, though not looking at me openly, and apparently entirely engrossed with their dinners, were listening attentively to what passed.

"*You don't know*," repeated Fräulein Sartorius, quickly seeing through my thin assumption of indifference, and proceeding to draw me out as much as possible. I wished Adelaide had been there to beat her from the field. She would have done it better than I could.

"No; because I have never been to any."

"Haven't you? How odd! How very odd! Isn't it strange?" she added, appealing to the boys. "Fräulein has never been to a theatre or a concert."

I disdained to remark that my words were being perverted, but the game instinct rose in me. Raising my voice a little, I remarked:

"It is evident that I have not enjoyed your advantages, but I trust that the gentlemen" (with a bow to the listening boys) "will make allowances for the difference between us."

The young gentlemen burst into a chorus of delighted giggles, and Anna, shooting a rapid glance at me, made a

slight grimace, but looked not at all displeased. I was, though, mightily: but, elate with victory, I turned to my compatriot at the other end of the table, and asked him at what time of the year Elberthal was pleasantest.

"Oh," said he, "it's always pleasant to me, but that's owing to myself. I make it so."

Just then, several of the other lads rose, pushing their chairs back with a great clatter, bowing to the assembled company, and saying "*Gesegnete Mahlzeit!*" as they went out.

"Why are you going, and what do they say?" I inquired of Miss Sartorius, who replied quite amiably:

"They are students at the *Realschule*. They have to be there at two o'clock, and they say, 'Blessed be the meal-time!' as they go out."

"Do they? How nice!" I could not help saying.

"Would you like to go for a walk this afternoon?" said she.

"Oh, *very* much!" I had exclaimed, before I had remembered that I did not like her, and did not intend to like her. "If Miss Hallam can spare me," I added.

"Oh, I think she will. I shall be ready at half-past two; then we shall return for coffee at four. I will knock at your door at the time."

On consulting Miss Hallam after dinner, I found she was quite willing for me to go out with Anna, and at the time appointed we set out.

Anna took me a tour round the town, showed me the lions, and gave me topographical details. She showed me

the big, plain barrack, and the desert waste of the *Exerzierplatz* spreading before it. She did her best to entertain me, and I, with a childish prejudice against her abrupt manner, and the free, somewhat challenging look of her black eyes, was reserved, unresponsive, stupid. I took a prejudice against her—I own it—and for that and other sins committed against a woman who would have been my friend if I would have let her, I say humbly, *Mea culpa!*

"It seems a dull kind of place," said I.

"It need not be. You have advantages here which you can't get everywhere. I have been here several years, and as I have no other home I rather think I shall live here."

"Oh, indeed."

"You have a home, I suppose?"

"Of course."

"Brothers and sisters?"

"Two sisters," I replied, mightily ruffled by what I chose to consider her curiosity and impertinence: though, when I looked at her, I saw what I could not but confess to be a real, and not unkind interest in her plain face and big eyes.

"Ah! I have no brothers and sisters. I have only a little house in the country, and as I have always lived in a town, I don't care for the country. It is so lonely. The people are so stupid too—not always though. You were offended with me at dinner, *nicht wahr?*"

"Oh dear no!" said I, very awkwardly and very untruly. The truth was, I did not like her, and was too young, too ignorant and *gauche* to try to smooth over my

dislike. I did not know the pain I was giving, and if I had, should perhaps not have behaved differently.

"*Doch!*" she said, smiling. "But I did not know what a child you were, or I should have let you alone."

More offended than ever, I maintained silence. If I were certainly touchy and ill to please, Fräulein Sartorius, it must be owned, did not know how to apologize gracefully. I have since, with wider knowledge of her country and its men and women, got to see that what made her so inharmonious was, that she had a woman's form, and a man's disposition and love of freedom. As her countrywomen taken in the gross are the most utterly "in bonds" of any women in Europe, this spoiled her life in a manner which cannot be understood here, where women in comparison are free as air, and gave no little of the brusqueness and roughness to her manner. In an enlightened English home she would have been an admirable, firm, clever woman; here she was that most dreadful of all abnormal growths—a woman with a will of her own.

"What do they do here?" I inquired indifferently.

"Oh many things. Though it is not a large town, there is a School of Art, which brings many painters here. There are a hundred and fifty—besides students."

"And you are a student?"

"Yes. One must have something to do—some *carrière* —though my countrywomen say not. I shall go away for a few months soon, but I am waiting for the last great concert. It will be the 'Paradise Lost' of Rubinstein."

"Ah, yes!" said I politely, but without interest. I

had never heard of Rubinstein and the *Verlorene Paradies*. Before the furore of 1876, how many scores of provincial English *had?*

"There is very much music here," she continued. "Are you fond of it?"

"Ye-es. I can't play much, but I can sing. I have come here partly to take singing lessons."

"So!"

"Who is the best teacher?" was my next ingenuous question.

She laughed.

"That depends upon what you want to learn. There are so many; violin, *Clavier*, that is piano, flute, *'cello*, everything."

"Oh!" I replied, and asked no more questions about music; but inquired if it were pleasant at Frau Steinmann's.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Is it pleasant anywhere? I don't find many places pleasant, because I cannot be a humbug, so others do not like me. But I believe some people like Elberthal very well. There is the theatre—that makes another element. And there are the soldiers and *Kaufleute*—merchants, I mean, so you see there is variety, though it is a small place."

"Ah, yes!" said I, looking about me as we passed down a very busy street, and I glanced to right and left with the image of Eugen Courvoisier ever distinctly if unconfessedly present to my mental view. Did he live at

Elberthal ? and if so, did he belong to any of those various callings ? What was he ? An artist who painted pictures for his bread ? I thought that very probable. There was something free and artist-like in his manner, in his loose waving hair and in his keen susceptibility to beauty. I thought of his emotion at hearing that glorious Bach music. Or was he a musician—what Anna Sartorius called *ein Musiker?* But no. My ideas of musicians were somewhat hazy, not to say utterly chaotic; they embraced only two classes; those who performed or gave lessons, and those who composed. I had never formed to myself the faintest idea of a composer, and my experience of teachers and performers was limited to one specimen—Mr. Smythe of Darton, whose method and performances would, as I have since learnt, have made the hair of a musician stand horrent on end. No—I did not think he was a musician. An actor ? Perish the thought, was my inevitable mental answer. How should I be able to make any better one ? A soldier, then ? At that moment we met a mounted Captain of Uhlans, harness clanking, accoutrements rattling. He was apparently an acquaintance of my companion, for he saluted with a grave politeness which sat well upon him.

Decidedly Eugen Courvoisier had the air of a soldier. That accounted for all. No doubt he was a soldier. In my ignorance of the strictness of German military regulations as regards the wearing of uniform, I overlooked the fact that he had been in civilian's dress, and remained delighted with my new idea: Captain Courvoisier.

"What is the German for Captain?" I inquired abruptly.

"*Hauptmann.*"

"Thank you." Hauptmann Eugen Courvoisier—a noble and a gallant title, and one which became him. "How much is a thaler?" was my next question.

"It is as much as three shillings in your money."

"Oh, thank you," said I, and did a little sum in my own mind. At that rate then, I owed Herr Courvoisier the sum of ten shillings. How glad I was to find it came within my means.

As I took off my things, I wondered when Herr Courvoisier would "make out his accounts." I trusted soon.

CHAPTER III

"Probe zum verlorenen Paradiese."



Miss Hallam fulfilled her promise with regard to my singing lessons. She had a conversation with Fräulein Sartorius, to whom, unpopular as she was, I noticed people constantly and almost instinctively went when in need of precise information or a slight dose of common sense and clear-headedness.

Miss Hallam inquired who was the best master.

"For singing, the Herr Direktor," replied Anna very promptly. "And then he directs the best of the musical *Vereine*—the clubs, societies, whatever you name them. At least he might try Miss Wedderburn's voice."

"Who is he?"

"The head of anything belonging to music in the town—*königlicher Musikdirektor*. He conducts all the great concerts, and though he does not sing himself, yet he is one of the best teachers in the province. Lots of people come and stay here on purpose to learn from him."

"And what are these *Vereine?*"

"Every season there are six great concerts given, and a seventh for the benefit of the Direktor. The orchestra and chorus together are called a *Verein—Musikverein*. The chorus is chiefly composed of ladies and gentlemen—amateurs, you know—*Dilettanten*. The Herr Direktor is very particular about voices. You pay so much for admission, and receive a card for the season. Then you have all the good teaching—the *Proben*."

"What *is* a Probe?" I demanded hastily, remembering that Courvoisier had used the word.

"What you call a rehearsal."

Ah! then he was musical. At last I had found it out. Perhaps *he* was one of the amateurs who sang at these concerts, and if so, I might see him again, and if so— But Anna went on:

"It is a very good thing for any one, particularly with such a teacher as von Francius."

"You must join," said Miss Hallam to me.

"There is Probe to-night to Rubinstein's 'Paradise Lost,'" said Anna. "I shall go, not to sing, but to listen. I can take Miss Wedderburn, if you like, and introduce her to Herr von Francius, whom I know."

"Very nice! very much obliged to you. Certainly," said Miss Hallam.

The Probe was fixed for seven, and shortly after that time we set off for the *Tonhalle*, or concert-hall, in which it was held.

"We shall be much too early," said she. "But the people are shamefully late. Most of them only come to *klatsch*, and flirt, or try to flirt, with the Herr Direktor."

This threw upon my mind a new light as to the Herr Direktor, and I walked by her side much impressed. She told me that if accepted I might even sing in the concert itself, as there had only been four Proben so far, and there were still several before the "Hauptprobe."

"What is the 'Hauptprobe'?" I inquired.

"General Rehearsal—when Herr von Francius is most unmerciful to his stupid pupils. I always attend that. I like to hear him make sport of them, and then the instrumentalists laugh at them. Von Francius *never* flatters."

Inspired with nightmare-like ideas as to this terrible "Hauptprobe," I found myself, with Anna, turning into a low-fronted building inscribed *Städtische Tonhalle*, the concert-hall of the good town of Elberthal.

"This way," said she. "It is in the Rittersaal. We don't go to the large saal till the Hauptprobe."

I followed her into a long, rather shabby-looking room, at one end of which was a low orchestra, about which were dotted the desks of the absent instrumentalists, and some stiff-looking *Celli* and *Contrabassi* kept watch from a wall. On the orchestra was already assembled a goodly number of young men and women, all in lively conversation, loud laughter, and apparently high good-humor with themselves and everything in the world.

A young man with a fuzz of hair standing off about a sad and depressed-looking countenance was stealing "in and out and round about," and distributing sheets of score to the company. In the conductor's place was a tall man in gray clothes, who leaned negligently against the rail, and held a conversation with a pretty young lady, who seemed much pleased with his attention. It did not strike me at first that this was the terrible *Direktor* of whom I had been hearing. He was young, had a slender, graceful figure, and an exceedingly handsome, though (I thought at first) an unpleasing face. There was something in his attitude and manner which at first I did not quite like. Anna walked up the room, and pausing before the estrade, said:

"Herr Direktor!"

He turned: his eyes fell upon her face, and left it instantly to look at mine. Gathering himself together into a more ceremonious attitude, he descended from his estrade, and stood beside us, a little to one side, looking at us with a leisurely calmness which made me feel, I knew not why, uncomfortable. Meanwhile, Anna took up her parable.

"May I introduce the young lady? Miss Wedderburn, Herr Musikdirektor von Francius. Miss Wedderburn wishes to join the *Verein*, if you think her voice will pass. Perhaps you will allow her to sing to-night?"

"Certainly, *mein Fräulein*," said he to me, not to Anna. He had a long, rather Jewish-looking face, black hair, eyes, and moustache. The features were thin, fine, and pointed. The thing which most struck me then, at any rate, was a certain expression which, conquering all others, dominated them—at once a hardness and a hardihood which impressed me disagreeably then, though I afterwards learnt, in knowing the man, to know much more truly the real meaning of that unflinching gaze and iron look.

"Your voice is what, *mein Fräulein?*" he asked.

"Soprano."

"Sopran? We will see. The Soprani sit over there, if you will have the goodness."

He pointed to the left of the orchestra, and called out to the melancholy-looking young man, "Herr Schönfeld, a chair for the young lady!"

Herr von Francius then ascended the orchestra, himself went to the piano, and, after a few directions, gave us the signal to begin. Till that day—I confess it with shame—I had never heard of the *Verlorene Paradies*. It came upon me like a revelation. I sang my best, substituting *do*, *re*, *mi*, etc., for the German words. Once or twice, as Herr von Francius' forefinger beat time, I thought I saw his head turn a little in our direction, but I scarcely heeded it. When the first chorus was over, he turned to me:

"You have not sung in a chorus before?"

"No."

"So! I should like to hear you sing something *sola*." He pushed towards me a pile of music, and while the others stood looking on and whispering amongst themselves, he went on, "Those are all sopran songs. Select one, if you please, and try it."

Not at all aware that the incident was considered unprecedented, and was creating a sensation, I turned over the music, seeking something I knew, but could find nothing. All in German, and all strange. Suddenly I came upon one entitled *Blute nur, liebes Herz*, the sopran solo which I had heard as I sat with Courvoisier in the cathedral. It seemed almost like an old friend. I opened it, and found it had also English words. That decided me.

"I will try this," said I, showing it to him.

He smiled. "'*S ist gut.*'" Then he read the title of the song aloud, and there was a general titter, as if some very great joke were in agitation, and were much appreciated. Indeed I found that in general the jokes of the Herr Direktor, when he condescended to make any, were very keenly relished by at least the lady part of his pupils.

Not understanding the reason of the titter I took the music in my hand, and waiting for a moment until he gave me the signal, sang it after the best wise I could—not *very* brilliantly, I dare say, but with at least all my heart poured into it. I had one requisite at least of an artist nature—I could abstract myself upon occasion com-



pletely from my surroundings. I did so now. It was too beautiful, too grand. I remembered that afternoon at Köln—the golden sunshine streaming through the painted windows, the flood of melody poured forth by the invisible singer; above all, I remembered who had been by my side, and I felt as if again beside him—again influenced by the unusual beauty of his face and mien, and by his clear, strange, commanding eyes. It all came back to me—the strangest, happiest day of my life. I sang as I had never sung before—as I had not known I *could* sing.

When I stopped, the tittering had ceased: silence saluted me. The young ladies were all looking at me: some of them had put on their eye-glasses; others stared at me as if I were some strange animal from a menagerie. The young gentlemen were whispering amongst themselves and taking sidelong glances at me. I scarcely heeded anything of it. I fixed my eyes upon the judge who had been listening to my performance—upon von Francius. He was pulling his moustache and at first made no remark.

"You have sung that song before, *mein Fräulein?*"

"No. I have heard it once. I have not seen the music before."

"So!" He bowed slightly, and turning once more to the others, said:

"We will begin the next chorus. Chorus of the Damned. Now, *meine Herrschaften*, I would wish to impress upon you one thing, if I can, that is—Silence, *meine Herren!*" he called sharply towards the tenors, who were giggling inanely amongst themselves. "A chorus of

damned souls," he proceeded composedly, "would not sing in the same unruffled manner as a young lady who warbles, 'Spring is come—tra la la! Spring is come—lira, lira!' in her mamma's drawing-room. Try to imagine yourself struggling in the tortures of hell—" (a delighted giggle, and a sort of "Oh, you dear, wicked man!" expression on the part of the young ladies: a nudging of each other on that of the young gentlemen), "and *sing as if you were damned.*"

Scarcely any one seemed to take the matter the least earnestly. The young ladies continued to giggle, and the young gentlemen to nudge each other. Little enough of expression, if plenty of noise, was there in that magnificent and truly difficult passage, the changing choruses of the Condemned and the Blessed ones—with its crowning "WEH!" thundering down from highest sopran to deepest bass.

"Lots of noise, and no meaning," observed the conductor, leaning himself against the rail of the estrade, face to his audience, folding his arms and surveying them all one after the other with cold self-possession. It struck me that he despised them while he condescended to instruct them. The power of the man struck me again. I began to like him better. At least I venerated his thorough understanding of what was to me a splendid mystery. No softening appeared in the master's eyes in answer to the rows of pretty appealing faces turned to him: no smile upon his contemptuous lips responded to the eyes—black, brown, gray, blue, yellow—all turned with such affecting

devotion to his own. Composing himself in an insouciant attitude, he began in a cool, indifferent voice, which had, however, certain caustic tones in it which stung *me* at least to the quick:

"I never heard anything worse, even from you. My honored *Fräulein;* my *jungen Herren;* just try *once* to imagine what you are singing about! It is not an exercise—it is not a love song, either of which you would no doubt perform excellently. Conceive what is happening! Put yourself back into those mythical times. Believe, for this evening, in the story of the forfeited Paradise. There is strife between the Blessed and the Damned; the obedient and the disobedient. There are thick clouds in the heavens—smoke, fire, and sulphur—a clashing of swords in the serried ranks of the angels: cannot you see Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, leading the heavenly host? Cannot some of you sympathize a little with *Satan* and his struggle?"

Looking at him, I thought they must indeed be an unimaginative set! in that dark face before them was Mephistopheles at least—*der Geist der stets verneint*—if nothing more violent. His cool, scornful features were lit up with some of the excitement which he could not drill into the assemblage before him. Had he been gifted with the requisite organ he would have acted and sung the chief character in *Faust con amore*.

"*Ich, um Gotteswillen!*" he went on, shrugging his shoulders, "try to forget what you are! Try to forget that none of you ever had a wicked thought or an unholy aspiration——"

("Don't they see how he is laughing at them?" I wondered.)

"You, chorus of the Condemned, try to conjure up every wicked thought you can, and let it come out in your voices—you who sing the strains of the blessed ones, think of what blessedness is. Surely each of you has his own idea! Some of you may agree with Lenore:

"'Bei ihm, bei ihm ist Seligkeit,
Und ohne Wilhelm Hölle!'"

If so, think of *him;* think of *her*—only sing it, whatever it is. Remember the strongest of feelings:

"'Die Engel nennen es Himmelsfreude,
Die Teufel nennen es Höllenqual,
Die Menschen nennen es—LIEBE!'

And sing it!"

He had not become loud or excited in voice or gesticulation, but his words, flung at them like so many scornful little bullets, the indifferent resignation of his attitude, had their effect upon the crew of giggling, simpering girls and awkward, self-conscious young men. Some idea seemed vouchsafed to them that perhaps their performance had not been *quite* all that it might have been: they began in a little more earnest, and the chorus went better.

For my own part, I was deeply moved. A vague excitement, a wild, and not altogether a holy one, had stolen over me. I understood now how the man might have influence. I bent to the power of his will, which reached

me where I stood in the background, from his dark eyes, which turned for a moment to me now and then. It was that will of his which put me as it were suddenly into the spirit of the music, and revealed to me depths in my own heart, at which I had never even guessed. Excited, with cheeks burning and my heart hot within me, I followed his words and his gestures, and grew so impatient of the dull stupidity of the others, that tears came to my eyes. How *could* that young woman, in the midst of the chorus, deliberately pause, arrange the knot of her necktie, and then, after a smile and a side-glance at the conductor, go on again with a more self-satisfied simper than ever upon her lips? What might not the thing be with a whole chorus of sympathetic singers? The very dulness which in fact prevailed revealed to me great regions of possible splendor, almost too vast to think of.

At last it was over. I turned to the Director, who was still near the piano, and asked timidly:

"Do you think I may join? Will my voice do?"

An odd expression crossed his face; he answered dryly:

"You may join the *Verein, mein Fräulein*—yes. Please come this way with me. Pardon, Fräulein Stockhausen—another time. I am sorry to say I have business at present."

A black look from a pretty brunette, who had advanced with an engaging smile and an open score to ask him some question, greeted this very composed rebuff of her advance. The black look was directed at me—guiltless.

Without taking any notice of the other, he led Anna and

me to a small inner room, where there was a desk and writing materials.

"Your name, if you will be good enough."

"Wedderburn."

"Your *Vorname*, though—your first name."

"My christian name—oh, May."

"M—a—*na!* Perhaps you will be so good as to write it yourself, and the street and number of the house in which you live."

I complied.

"Have you been here long?"

"Not quite a week."

"Do you intend to make any stay?"

"Some months, probably."

"Humph! If you wish to make any progress in music, you must stay much longer."

"It—I—it depends upon other people how long I remain."

He smiled slightly, and his smile was not unpleasant: lighted up the darkness of his face in an agreeable manner.

"So I should suppose. I will call upon you to-morrow at four in the afternoon. I should like to have a little conversation with you about your voice. Adieu, *meine Damen*."

With a slight bow which sufficiently dismissed us, he turned to the desk again, and we went away.

Our homeward walk was a somewhat silent one. Anna certainly asked me suddenly where I had learnt to sing.

"I have not learnt properly. I can't help singing."

"I did not know that you had a voice like that," said she, again.

"Like what?"

"Herr von Francius will tell you all about it to-morrow," said she abruptly.

"What a strange man Herr von Francius is!" said I. "Is he clever?"

"Oh, very clever."

"At first I did not like him. Now I think I do, though."

She made no answer for a few minutes; then said:

"He is an excellent teacher."

CHAPTER IV

Herr von Francius

When Miss Hallam heard from Anna Sartorius that my singing had evidently struck Herr von Francius, and of his intended visit, she looked pleased—so pleased that I was surprised.

He came the following afternoon, at the time he had specified. Now, in the broad daylight, and apart from his official, professional manner, I found the Herr Direktor still different from the man of last night, and yet the same. He looked even younger now than on the estrade last night, and quiet though his demeanor was, attuned to a gentlemanly calm and evenness, there was still the one thing, the

cool, hard glance left, to unite him with the dark, somewhat sinister-looking personage who had cast his eyes round our circle last night, and told us to sing as if we were damned.

"Miss Hallam, this is Herr von Francius," said I. "He speaks English," I added.

Von Francius glanced from her to me with a somewhat inquiring expression.

Miss Hallam received him graciously, and they talked about all sorts of trifles, whilst I sat by in seemly silence, till at last Miss Hallam said:

"Can you give me any opinion upon Miss Wedderburn's voice?"

"Scarcely, until I have given it another trial. She seems to have had no training."

"No, that is true," she said, and proceeded to inform him casually that she wished me to have every advantage I could get from my stay in Elberthal, and must put the matter into his hands. Von Francius looked pleased.

For my part, I was deeply moved. Miss Hallam's generosity to one so stupid and ignorant touched me nearly.

Von Francius, pausing a short time, at last said:

"I must try her voice again, as I remarked. Last night I was struck with her sense of the dramatic point of what we were singing—a quality which I do not too often find in my pupils. I think, *mein Fraulein*, that with care and study you might take a place on the stage."

"The stage!" I repeated, startled, and thinking of Courvoisier's words.

But von Francius had been reckoning without his host.

When Miss Hallam spoke of "putting the matter into his hands," she understood the words in her own sense.

"The stage!" said she, with a slight shiver. "That is quite out of the question. Miss Wedderburn is a young lady—not an actress."

"So! Then it is impossible to be both in your country?" said he, with polite sarcasm. "I spoke as simple *Künstler*—artist—I was not thinking of anything else. I do not think the *gnädige Fräulein* will ever make a good singer of mere songs. She requires emotion to bring out her best powers—a little passion—a little scope for acting and *abandon* before she can attain the full extent of her talent."

He spoke in the most perfectly matter-of-fact way, and I trembled. I feared lest this display of what Miss Hallam would consider little short of indecent laxity and Bohemianism, would shock her so much that I should lose everything by it. It was not so, however.

"Passion—*abandon*! I think you *cannot* understand what you are talking about!" said she. "My dear sir, you must understand that those kind of things may be all very well for one set of people, but not for that class to which Miss Wedderburn belongs. Her father is a clergyman"—Von Francius bowed, as if he did not quite see what that had to do with it—"in short, *that* idea is impossible. I tell you plainly. She may learn as much as she likes, but she will never be allowed to go upon the stage."

"Then she may teach?" said he inquiringly.

"Certainly. I believe that is what she wishes to do, in case—if necessary."

"She may teach, but she may not act," said he reflectively. "So be it, then! Only," he added, as if making a last effort, "I would just mention that, apart from artistic considerations, while a lady may wear herself out as a poorly-paid teacher, a *prima donna*——"

Miss Hallam smiled with calm disdain.

"It is not of the least use to speak of such a thing. You and I look at the matter from quite different points of view, and to argue about it would only be to waste time."

Von Francius, with a sarcastic, ambiguous smile, turned to me:

"And you, *mein Fräulein?*"

"I—no. I agree with Miss Hallam," I murmured, not really having found myself able to think about it at all, but conscious that opposition was useless. And, besides, I did shrink away from the ideas conjured up by that word "the stage."

"So!" said he, with a little bow and a half smile. "*Also!* I must try to make the round man fit into the square hole. The first thing will be another trial of your voice; then I must see how many lessons a week you will require, and must give you instructions about practising. You must understand that it is not pleasure or child's play which you are undertaking. It is a work in order to accomplish which you must strain every nerve, and give up everything which in any way interferes with it."

"I don't know whether I shall have time for it," I murmured, looking doubtfully at Miss Hallam.

"Yes, May; you will have time for it," was all she said.

"Is there a piano in the house?" said von Francius. "But, yes, certainly. Fräulein Sartorius has one; she will lend it to us for half an hour. If you are at liberty, *mein Fräulein*, just now——"

"Certainly," said I, following him, as he told Miss Hallam that he would see her again.

As he knocked at the door of Anna's sitting-room, she came out, dressed for walking.

"*Ach, Fräulein!* will you allow us the use of your piano for a few minutes?"

"*Bitte!*" said she, motioning us into the room. "I am sorry I have an engagement, and must leave you."

"Do not let us keep you on *any* account," said he, with touching politeness; and she went out.

"*Desto besser!*" he observed, shrugging his shoulders.

He pulled off his gloves with rather an impatient gesture, seated himself at the piano, and struck some chords in an annoyed manner.

"Who is that old lady?" he inquired, looking up at me. "Any relation of yours?"

"No—oh no! I am her companion."

"So! And you mean to let her prevent you from following the career you have a talent for?"

"If I do not do as she wishes, I shall have no chance of following any career at all," said I. "And, besides,

how does any one know that I *have* a talent—for—for—what you say?"

"I know it: that is why I said it. I wish I could persuade that old lady to my way of thinking!" he added. "I wish you were out of her hands and in mine. *Na!* we shall see!"

It was not a very long "trial" that he gave me: we soon rose from the piano.

"To-morrow at eleven I come to give you a lesson," said he. "I am going to talk to Miss Hallam now. You please not come. I wish to see her alone: and I can manage her better by myself, *nicht wahr!*"

"Thank you," said I in a subdued tone.

"You must have a piano, too," he added: "and we must have the room to ourselves. I allow no third person to be present at my private lessons; but go on the principle of Paul Heyse's hero, Edwin, either in open lecture, or *unter vier Augen*."

With that he held the door open for me, and as I turned into my room, shook hands with me in a friendly manner, bidding me expect him on the morrow.

Certainly, I decided, Herr von Francius was quite unlike any one I had ever seen before; and how *awfully* cool he was, and self-possessed. I liked him well, though.

The next morning Herr von Francius gave me my first lesson, and after that I had one from him nearly every day. As teacher and as acquaintance he was, as it were, two different men. As teacher he was strict, severe, gave much blame and little praise: but when he did once

praise me, I remember, I carried the remembrance of it with me for days, as a ray of sunshine. He seemed never surprised to find how much work had been prepared for him, although he would express displeasure sometimes at its quality. He was a teacher whom it was impossible not to respect, whom one obeyed by instinct. As man, as acquaintance, I knew little of him, though I heard much —idle tales, which it would be as idle to repeat. They chiefly related to his domineering disposition and determination to go his own way, and disregard that of others. In this fashion my life became busy enough.



CHAPTER V

"Lohengrin"

As time went on, the image of Eugen Courvoisier, my unspoken-of, unguessed-at, friend did *not* fade from my memory. It grew stronger. I thought of him every day—never went out without a distinct hope that I might see him; never came in without vivid disappointment that I had not seen him. I carried three thaler ten groschen so arranged in my purse that I could lay my hand upon them at a moment's notice, for as the days went on, it appeared that Herr Courvoisier had not made up his accounts, or if he had, had not chosen to claim that part of them owed by me.

I did not see him. I began dismally to think that after all the whole thing was at an end. He did not live at Elberthal—he had certainly never told me that he did, I reminded myself. He had gone about his business and interests—had forgotten the waif he had helped one spring afternoon, and I should never see him again. My heart fell, and sank with a reasonless, aimless pang. What did it, could it, ought it to matter to me whether I ever saw him again or not? Nothing, certainly, and yet I troubled myself about it a great deal. I made little dramas in my mind of how he and I were to meet, and how I *would* exert my will, and make him take the money. Whenever I saw an unusually large or handsome house, I instantly fell to wondering if it were his, and sometimes made inquiries as to the owner of any particularly eligible residence. I heard of Brauns, Müllers, Piepers, Schmidts, and the like, as owners of the same—never the name Courvoisier. He had disappeared—I feared for ever.

Coming in weary one day from the town, where I had been striving to make myself understood in shops, I was met by Anna Sartorius on the stairs. She had not ceased to be civil to me—civil, that is, in her way—and my unreasoning aversion to her was as great as ever.

"This is the last opera of the season," said she, displaying a pink ticket. "I am glad you will get to see one, as the theatre closes after to-night."

"But I am not going."

"Yes, you are. Miss Hallam has a ticket for you. I am going to chaperon you."

"I must go and see about that," said I hastily, rushing upstairs.

The news, incredible though it seemed, was quite true. The ticket lay there. I picked it up and gazed at it fondly. *Stadttheater zu Elberthal. Parquet, No.* 16. As I had never been in a theatre in my life, this conveyed no distinct idea to my mind, but it was quite enough for me that I was going. The rest of the party, I found, were to consist of Vincent, the Englishman, Anna Sartorius, and the Dutch boy, Brinks.

It was Friday evening, and the opera was *Lohengrin*. I knew nothing, then, about different operatic styles, and my ideas of operatic music were based upon duets upon selected airs from *La Traviata*, *La Sonnambula*, and *Lucia*. I thought the story of *Lohengrin*, as related by Vincent, interesting. I was not in the least aware that my first opera was to be a different one from that of most English girls. Since, I have wondered sometimes what would be the result, upon the musical taste of a person who was put through a course of Wagnerian opera *first*, and then turned over to the Italian school—leaving Mozart, Beethoven, Gluck to take care of themselves, as they may very well do—thus exactly reversing the usual (English) process.

Anna was very quiet that evening. Afterwards I knew that she must have been observing me. We were in the first row of the *Parquet*, with the orchestra alone between us and the stage. I was fully occupied in looking about me—now at the curtain hiding the great mystery, now

behind and above me at the boxes, in a youthful state of ever-increasing hope and expectation.

"We are very early," said Vincent, who was next to me, "very early, and very near," he added, but he did not seem much distressed at either circumstance.

Then the gas was suddenly turned up quite high. The bustle increased cheerfully. The old, young, and middle-aged ladies who filled the *Logen* in the *Ersten Rang*—hardened theatre-goers, who came as regularly every night in the week during the eight months of the season as they ate their breakfasts and went to their beds, were gossiping with the utmost violence, exchanging nods and odd little old-fashioned bows with other ladies in all parts of the house, leaning over to look whether the *Parquet* was well filled, and remarking that there were more people in the *Balcon* than usual. The musicians were dropping into the orchestra. I was startled to see a face I knew—that pleasant-looking young violinist with the brown eyes, whose name I had heard called out at the Eye Hospital. They all seemed very fond of him, particularly a man who struggled about with a violoncello, and who seemed to have a series of jokes to relate to Herr Helfen, exploding with laughter, and every now and then shaking the loose thick hair from his handsome, genial face. Helfen listened to him with a half-smile, screwing up his violin and giving him a quiet look now and then. The inspiring noise of tuning-up had begun, and I was on the very tip-toe of expectation.

As I turned once more and looked round, Vincent said,

laughing, "Miss Wedderburn, your hat has hit me three times in the face." It was, by-the-bye, *the* brown hat which had graced my head that day at Köln.

"Oh, has it? I beg your pardon!" said I, laughing too, as I brought my eyes again to bear upon the stage. "The seats are too near toge——"

Further words were upon my lips, but they were never uttered. In roving across the orchestra to the foot-lights, my eyes were arrested. In the well of the orchestra, immediately before my eyes, was one empty chair, that by right belonging to the leader of the first violins. Friedhelm Helfen sat in the one next below it. All the rest of the musicians were assembled. The conductor was in his place, and looked a little impatiently towards that empty chair. Through the door to the left of the orchestra there came a man, carrying a violin, and made his way, with a nod here, a half-smile there, a tap on the shoulder in another direction. Arrived at the empty chair, he laid his hand upon Helfen's shoulder, and bending over him, spoke to him as he seated himself. He kept his hand on that shoulder, as if he liked it to be there. Helfen's eyes said as plainly as possible that *he* liked it. Fast friends, on the face of it, were these two men. In this moment, though I sat still, motionless, and quiet, I certainly realized as nearly as possible that *im*possible sensation, the turning upside down of the world. I did not breathe. I waited, spell-bound, in the vague idea that my eyes might open, and I find that I had been dreaming. After an earnest speech to Helfen the new-comer raised his head,

and as he shouldered his violin, his eyes travelled carelessly along the first row of the Parquet—*our* row. I did not awake; things did not melt away in mist before my eyes. He *was* Eugen Courvoisier, and he looked braver, handsomer, gallanter, and more apart from the crowd of men now, in this moment, than even my sentimental dreams had pictured him. I felt it all: I also know now that it was partly the very strength of the feeling I had—the very intensity of the admiration which took from me reflection and reason for the moment. I felt as if every one must see how I felt. I remembered that no one knew what had happened. I dreaded lest they should. I did the most cowardly and treacherous thing that circumstances permitted to me—displayed to what an extent my power of folly and stupidity *could* carry me. I saw these strange, bright eyes, whose power I felt, coming towards me. In one second they would be upon me. I felt myself white with anxiety. His eyes were coming—coming—slowly, surely. They had fallen upon Vincent, and he nodded to him. They fell upon me. It was for the tenth of a second only. I saw a look of recognition flash into his eyes—upon his face. I saw he was *going* to bow to me. With (as it seemed to me) all the blood in my veins rushing to my face, my head swimming, my heart beating, I dropped my eyes to the playbill upon my lap, and stared at the crabbed German characters—the names of the players, the characters they took. "Elsa—Lohengrin." I read them again and again, while my ears were singing, my heart beating so,

and I thought every one in the theatre knew and was looking at me.

"Mind you listen to the overture, Miss Wedderburn," said Vincent hastily, in my ear, as the first liquid, yearning, long-drawn notes sounded from the violins.

"Yes," said I, raising my face at last, and looking, or rather feeling a look compelled from me, to the place where he sat. This time our eyes met fully. I do not know what I felt when I saw him look at me as unrecognizingly as if I had been a wooden doll in a shop window. Was he looking past me? No. His eyes met mine direct—glance for glance: not a sign, not a quiver of the mouth, not a waver of the eyelids. I heard no more of the overture. When he was playing, and so occupied with his music, I observed him surreptitiously: when he was not playing, I kept my eyes fixed firmly upon my play-bill. I did not know whether to be most distressed at my own disloyalty to a kind friend, or most appalled to find that the man with whom I had spent a whole afternoon in the firm conviction that he was outwardly, as well as inwardly, my equal and a gentleman—(how the tears, half of shame, half of joy, rise to my eyes now as I think of my poor, pedantic little scruples *then*!)—the man of whom I had assuredly thought and dreamed many and many a time and oft was—a professional musician, a man in a band, a German band, playing in the public orchestra of a provincial town. Well! well!

In our village at home, where the population consisted of clergymen's widows, daughters of deceased naval officers,

and old women in general, and those old women ladies of the genteelest description—the Army and the Church (for which I had been brought up to have the deepest veneration and esteem, as the two head powers in our land—for we did not take Manchester, Birmingham, and Liverpool into account at Skernford)—the Army and the Church, I say, looked down a little upon Medicine and the Law, as being perhaps more necessary, but less select factors in that great sum—the Nation. Medicine and the Law looked down very decidedly upon commercial wealth, and Commerce in her turn turned up her nose at retail establishments, while one and all—Church and Army, Law and Medicine, Commerce in the gross and Commerce in the little—united in pointing the finger at artists, musicians, literati, *et id omne genus*, considering them, with some few well-known and orthodox exceptions, as Bohemians, and calling them "persons"—a name whose mighty influence is unknown to those who never were and never will be "persons." They were a class with whom we had and could have nothing in common; so utterly outside our life, that we scarcely ever gave a thought to their existence. We read of pictures, and wished to see them: heard of musical wonders, and desired to hear them—*as* pictures, *as* compositions. I do not think it ever entered our heads to remember that a man with a quick life throbbing in his veins, with feelings, hopes, and fears and thoughts, painted the picture, and that in seeing it we also saw him—that a consciousness, if possible, yet more keen and vivid produced the combinations of sound which brought

tears to our eyes when we heard "the band"—beautiful abstraction!—play them. Certainly we never considered the performers as anything more than people who could play—one who blew his breath into a brass tube, another into a wooden pipe; one who scraped a small fiddle with fine strings, another who scraped a big one with coarse strings.

I was seventeen, and not having an original mind, had up to now judged things from earlier teaching and impressions. I do not ask to be excused. I only say that I was ignorant; as ignorant as ever *even* a girl of seventeen was. I did not know the amount of art and culture which lay amongst those rather shabby-looking members of the Elberthal *städtische Kapelle*—did not know that that little cherubic-faced man, who drew his bow so lovingly across his violin, had played under Mendelssohn's conductorship, and could tell tales about how the master had drilled his band, and what he had said about the first performance of the *Lobgesang*. The young man to whom I had seen Courvoisier speak, was—I learnt it later—a performer to ravish the senses, a conductor in the true sense—not a mere man who waves a stick up and down, but one who can put some of the meaning of the music into his gestures, and dominate his players. I did not know that the musicians before me were nearly all true artists, and some of them undoubted gentlemen to boot, even if their income averaged something under that of a skilled Lancashire operative. But, even if I had known it as well as possible, and had been aware that there could be nothing derogatory

in my knowing or being known by one of them, I could not have been more wretched than I was in having been, as it were, false to a friend. The dreadful thing was, or ought to be—I could not quite decide which—that such a person should have been my friend.

"How he *must* despise me!" I thought, my cheeks burning, my eyes fastened upon the play-bill. "I owe him ten shillings. If he likes he can point me out to them all and say, 'That is an English girl—lady I cannot call her. I found her quite alone and lost at Köln, and I did all I could to help her. I saved her a great deal of anxiety and inconvenience. She was not above accepting my assistance; she confided her story freely to me; she is nothing very particular—has nothing to boast of—no money, no knowledge, nothing superior; in fact, she is simple and ignorant to a quite surprising extent; but she has just cut me dead. What do you think of her?'"

Until the curtain went up I sat in torture. When the play began, however, even my discomfort vanished in my wonder at the spectacle. It was the first I had seen. Try to picture it, O worn-out and blasé frequenter of play and opera! Try to realize the feelings of an impressionable young person of seventeen when *Lohengrin* was revealed to her for the first time—Lohengrin, the mystic knight, with the glamour of eld upon him—Lohengrin, sailing in blue and silver, like a dream, in his swan-drawn boat, stepping majestic forth, and speaking in a voice of purest melody, as he thanks the bird and dismisses it:

"Dahin, woher mich trug dein Kahn,
Kehr' wieder nur zu unserm Glück!
Drum sei getreu dein Dienst gethan,
Leb' wohl, leb' wohl, mein lieber Schwan."

Elsa, with the wonder, the gratitude, the love, and alas! the weakness in her eyes! The astonished Brabantine men and women. They could not have been more astonished than I was. It was all perfectly real to me. What did I know about the stage? To me, yonder figure in blue mantle and glittering armor was Lohengrin, the son of Percivale, not Herr Sieger, the first tenor of the company, who acted stiffly, and did not know what to do with his legs. The lady in black velvet and spangles, who gesticulated in a corner, was an *Edelfrau* to me, as the programme called her, not the chorus leader, with two front teeth missing, an inartistically made-up countenance, and large feet. I sat through the first act with my eyes riveted upon the stage. What a thrill shot through me as the tenor embraced the soprano, and warbled melodiously, "*Elsa, ich liebe Dich!*" My mouth and eyes were wide open, I have no doubt, till at last the curtain fell. With a long sigh I slowly brought my eyes down, and *Lohengrin* vanished like a dream. There was Eugen Courvoisier standing up—he had resumed the old attitude—was twirling his moustache and surveying the company. Some of the other performers were leaving the orchestra by two little doors. If only he would go too! As I nervously contemplated a gracefully indifferent remark to Herr Brinks, who sat next to me, I saw Courvoisier step forward. Was he, could he

be going to speak to me? I should have deserved it, I knew, but I felt as if I should die under the ordeal. I sat preternaturally still, and watched, as if mesmerized, the approach of the musician. He spoke again to the young man whom I had seen before, and they both laughed. Perhaps he had confided the whole story to him, and was telling him to observe what he was going to do. Then Herr Courvoisier tapped the young man on the shoulder and laughed again, and then he came on. He was not looking at me; he came up to the boarding, leaned his elbow upon it, and said to Eustace Vincent:

"Good-evening: *Wie geht's Ihnen?*"

Vincent held out his hand. "Very well, thanks. And you? I haven't seen you lately."

"Then you haven't been at the theatre lately," he laughed. He never testified to me by word or look that he had even seen me before. At last I got to understand, as his eyes repeatedly fell upon me without the slightest sign of recognition, that he did not intend to claim my acquaintance. I do not know whether I was most wretched or most relieved at the discovery. It spared me a great deal of embarrassment; it filled me, too, with inward shame beyond all description. And then, too, I was dismayed to find how totally I had mistaken the position of the musician. Vincent was talking eagerly to him. They had moved a little nearer the other end of the orchestra. The young man, Helfen, had come up: others had joined them. I, meanwhile, sat still—heard every tone of his voice, took in every gesture of his head or his hand, and

felt as I trust never to feel again—and yet I lived in some such feeling as that for what at least seemed to me a long time. What was the feeling that clutched me—held me fast—seemed to burn me? And what was that I heard? Vincent speaking:

"Last Thursday week, Courvoisier—why didn't you come? We were waiting for you."

"I missed the train."

Until now he had been speaking German, but he said this distinctly in English, and I heard every word.

"Missed the train?" cried Vincent in his cracked voice. "Nonsense, man! Helfen, here, and Alekotte were in time, and they had been at the Probe as much as you."

"I was detained in Köln and couldn't get back till evening," said he. "Come along, Friedel; there's the call-bell."

I raised my eyes—met his. I do not know what expression was in mine. His never wavered, though he looked at me long and steadily—no glance of recognition—no sign still. I would have risked the astonishment of every one of them now, for a sign that he remembered me. None was given.

Lohengrin had no more attraction for me. I felt in pain that was almost physical, and weak with excitement as at last the curtain fell and we left our places.

"You were very quiet," said Vincent, as we walked home. "Did you not enjoy it?"

"Very much, thank you. It was very beautiful," said I faintly.

"So Herr Courvoisier was not at the Soirée," said the loud rough voice of Anna Sartorius.

"No," was all Vincent said.

"Did you have anything new? Was Herr von Francius there too?"

"Yes; he was there too."

I pondered. Brinks whistled loudly the air of Elsa's *Brautzug*, and we paced across the Lindenallée. We had not many paces to go. The lamps were lighted, the people were thronging thick as in the day-time. The air was full of laughter, talk, whistling and humming of the airs from the opera. My ear strained eagerly through the confusion. I could have caught the faintest sound of Courvoisier's voice had it been there, but it was not. And we came home; Vincent opened the door with his latch-key, said, "It has not been very brilliant, has it? That tenor is a stick," and we all went to our different rooms. It was in such wise that I met Eugen Courvoisier for the second time.



CHAPTER VI

"Will you sing?"

The theatre season closed with that evening on which *Lohengrin* was performed. I ran no risk of meeting Courvoisier face to face again in that alarming, sudden manner. But the subject had assumed diseased proportions in my mind. I found myself confronted with him yet, and week after week. My business in Elberthal was music—to learn as much music and hear as much music as I could: wherever there was music there was also Eugen Courvoisier—naturally. There was only one *städtische Kapelle* in Elberthal. Once a week at least—each Saturday—I saw him, and he saw me at the unfailing Instrumental Concert to which every one in the house went, and to absent myself from which would instantly have set every one wondering what could be my motive for it. My usual companions were Clara Steinmann, Vincent, the Englishman, and often Frau Steinmann herself. Anna Sartorius and some other girl-students of art usually brought sketch-books, and were far too much occupied in making studies or caricatures of the audience to pay much attention to the music. The

audience were, however, hardened; they were used to it. Anna and her friends were not alone in the practice. There were a dozen or more artists or *soi-disant* artists busily engaged with their sketch-books. The concert-room offered a rich field to them. One could at least be sure of one thing—that they were *not* taking off the persons at whom they looked most intently. There must be quite a gallery hidden away in some old sketch-books—of portraits or wicked caricatures of the audience that frequented the concerts of the *Instrumental Musik Verein*. I wonder where they all are? Who has them? What has become of the light-hearted sketchers? I often recall those homely Saturday evening concerts; the long, shabby saal with its faded, out-of-date decorations; its rows of small tables with the well-known groups around them; the mixed and motley audience. How easy, after a little while, to pick out the English, by their look of complacent pleasure at the delightful ease and unceremoniousness of the whole affair: their gladness at finding a public entertainment where one's clothes were not obliged to be selected with a view to outshining those of every one else in the room; the students shrouded in a mystery, sacred and impenetrable, of tobacco smoke. The spruce-looking schoolboys from the *Gymnasium* and *Realschule*, the old captains and generals, the Fräulein their daughters, the *gnädigen Frauen* their wives: dressed in the disastrous plaids, checks, and stripes, which somehow none but German women ever get hold of. Shades of *Le Follet!* What costumes there were on young and old for an observing

eye! What bonnets, what boots, what stupendously daring accumulation of colors and styles and periods of dress crammed and piled on the person of one substantial Frau Generalin, or Doctorin, or Professorin!

The low orchestra—the tall, slight, yet commanding figure of von Francius on the estrade; his dark face with its indescribable mixture of pride, impenetrability, and insouciance; the musicians behind him—every face of them as well known to the audience as those of the audience to them: it was not a mere "concert," which in England is another word for so much expense and so much vanity—it was a gathering of friends. We knew the music in which the *Kapelle* was most at home; we knew their strong points and their weak ones; the passage in the Pastoral Symphony where the second violins were a little weak; that overture where the *Blasinstrumente* came out so well—the symphonies one heard—the divine wealth of undying art and beauty! Those days are past: despite what I suffered in them they had their joys for me. Yes; I suffered at those concerts. I must ever see the one face which for me blotted out all others in the room, and endure the silent contempt which I believed I saw upon it. Probably it was my own feeling of inward self-contempt which made me believe I saw that expression there. His face had for me a miserable, basilisk-like attraction. When I was there and he was there, I must look at him and endure the silent, smiling disdain which I at least believed he bestowed upon me. How did he contrive to do it? How often our eyes met, and every time it hap-

pened he looked me full in the face, and never would give me the faintest gleam of recognition. It was as though I looked at two diamonds, which returned my stare unwinkingly and unseeingly. I managed to make myself thoroughly miserable—pale and thin with anxiety and self-reproach. I let this man, and the speculations concerning him, take up my whole thoughts, and I kept silence, because I dreaded so intensely lest any question should bring out the truth. I smiled drearily when I thought that there certainly was no danger of any one but Miss Hallam ever knowing it, for the only person who could have betrayed me chose now, of deliberate purpose, to cut me as completely as I had once cut him.

As if to show very decidedly that he *did* intend to cut me, I met him one day, not in the street, but in the house, on the stairs. He sprang up the steps, two at a time, came to a momentary pause on the landing, and looked at me. No look of surprise, none of recognition. He raised his hat, that was nothing; in ordinary politeness he would have done it had he never seen me in his life before. The same cold, bright, *hard* glance fell upon me, keen as an eagle's, and as devoid of every gentle influence as the same.

I silently held out my hand.

He looked at it for a moment, then with a grave coolness which chilled me to the soul, murmured something about "not having the honor," bowed slightly, and stepping forward, walked into Vincent's room.

I was going to the room in which my piano stood, where I had my music lessons, for they had told me that Herr von

Francius was waiting. I looked at him as I went into the room. How different he was from that other man: darker, more secret, more scornful-looking, with not less power, but so much less benevolence.

I was *distraite*, and sang exceedingly ill. We had been going through the solo sopran part of the *Paradise Lost*. I believe I sang vilely that morning. I was not thinking of Eva's sin and the serpent, but of other things, which, despite the story related in the Book of Genesis, touched me more nearly. Several times already had he made me sing through Eva's stammering answer to her God's question:

> "Ah, Lord! . . . The Serpent!
> The beautiful, glittering Serpent,
> With his beautiful, glittering words,
> He, Lord, did lead astray
> The weak Woman!"

"*Bah!*" exclaimed von Francius, when I had sung it some three or four times, each time worse, each time more distractedly. He flung the music upon the floor, and his eyes flashed, startling me from my uneasy thoughts back to the present. He was looking at me with a dark cloud upon his face. I stared, stooped meekly, and picked up the music.

"Fräulein, what are you dreaming about?" he asked impatiently. "You are not singing Eva's shame and dawning terror as she feels herself undone. You are singing—and badly, too—a mere sentimental song, such as any schoolgirl might stumble through. I am ashamed of you."

"I—I," stammered I, crimsoning, and ashamed for myself too.

"You were thinking of something else," he said, his brow clearing a little. "*Na!* it comes so sometimes. Something has happened to distract your attention. The amiable Miss Hallam has been a little *more* amiable than usual."

"No."

"Well, well. '*S ist mir egal.* But now, as you have wasted half an hour in vanity and vexation, will you be good enough to let your thoughts return here to me and to your duty? or else—I must go, and leave the lesson till you are in the right voice again."

"I am all right—try me," said I, my pride rising in arms as I thought of Courvoisier's behavior a short time ago.

"Very well. Now. You are Eva, please remember, the first woman, and you have gone wrong. Think of who is questioning you, and——"

"Oh yes, yes. I know. Please begin."

He began the accompaniment, and I sang for the fifth time Eva's scattered notes of shame and excuse.

"Brava!" said he when I had finished, and I was the more startled as he had never before given me the faintest sign of approval, but had found such constant fault with me, that I usually had a fit of weeping after my lesson; weeping with rage and disappointment at my own shortcomings.

"At last you know what it means," said he. "I always told you your forte was dramatic singing."

"Dramatic! but this is an oratorio."

"It may be called an oratorio, but it is a drama all the same. What more dramatic, for instance, than what you have just sung, and all that goes before? Now suppose we go on. I will take Adam."

Having given myself up to the music I sang my best with earnestness. When we had finished von Francius closed the book, looked at me, and said:

"Will you sing the *Eva* at the concert?"

"*I?*"

He bowed silently, and still kept his eyes fixed upon my face, as if to say, "Refuse if you dare!"

"I—I'm afraid I should make such a mess of it," I murmured at last.

"Why any more than to-day?"

"Oh! but all the people!" said I, expostulating: "it is so different."

He gave a little laugh of some amusement.

"How odd! and yet how like you!" said he. "Do you suppose that the people who will be at the concert will be half as much alive to your defects as I am? If you can sing before me, surely you can sing before so many rows of——"

"Cabbages? I wish I could think they were."

"Nonsense! What would be the use, where the pleasure in singing to cabbages? I mean simply inhabitants of Elberthal. What can there be so formidable about *them?*"

I murmured something.

"Well, will you do it?"

"I am sure I should break down," said I, trying to find some sign of relenting in his eyes. I discovered none. He was not waiting to hear whether I said "yes" or "no"; he was waiting *until* I said "yes."

"If you did," he replied with a friendly smile, "I should never teach you another note."

"Why not?"

"Because you would be a coward, and not worth teaching."

"But Miss Hallam?"

"Leave her to me."

I still hesitated.

"It is the *premier pas qui coûte*," said he, still keeping a friendly but determined gaze upon my undecided face.

"I want to accustom you to appearing in public," he added. "By degrees, you know. There is nothing unusual in *Germany* for one in your position to sing in such a concert."

"I was not thinking of that; but that it is impossible that I can sing well enough——"

"You sing well enough for my purpose. You will be amazed to find what an impetus to your studies, and what a fillip to your industry will be given by once singing before a number of other people. And then, on the stage——"

"But I am not going on the stage."

"I think you are. At least, if you do otherwise you will do wrong. You have gifts which are in themselves a responsibility."

"I—gifts—what gifts?" I asked incredulously. "I am as stupid as a donkey. My sisters always said so, and sisters are sure to know; you may trust them for that."

"Then you will take the sopran solos?"

"Do you think I can?"

"I don't *think* you can; I say you *must*. I will call upon Miss Hallam this afternoon. And the *gage*—fee—what you call it?—is fifty thaler."

"*What!*" I cried, my whole attitude changing to one of greedy expectation. "Shall I be *paid?*"

"Why, *natürlich*," said he, turning over sheets of music, and averting his face to hide a smile.

"Oh! then I will sing."

"Good! Only please to remember that it is my concert, and I am responsible for the soloists; and pray think rather more about the beautiful glittering serpent than about the beautiful glittering thaler."

"I can think about both," was my unholy, time-serving reply.

Fifty thaler! Untold gold!

CHAPTER VII

Prinz Eugen, der edle Ritter

It was the evening of the Hauptprobe, a fine moonlight night in the middle of May—a month since I had come to Elberthal, and it seemed so much, so very much more.

To my astonishment—and far from agreeable astonish-

ment—Anna Sartorius informed me of her intention to accompany me to the Probe. I put objections in her way as well as I knew how, and said I did not think outsiders were admitted. She laughed and said:

"That is too funny, that you should instruct me in such a thing. Why, I have a ticket for all the Proben, as any one can have who chooses to pay two thaler at the *Casse*. I have a mind to hear this. They say the orchestra are going to rebel against von Francius. And I am going to the concert to-morrow, too. One cannot hear too much of such fine music; and when one's friend sings, too——"

"What friend of yours is going to sing?" I inquired coldly.

"Why, you, you *allerliebster kleiner Engel*," said she, in a tone of familiarity, to which I strongly objected.

I could say no more against her going, but certainly displayed no enthusiastic desire for her company.

The Probe, we found, was to be in the great Saal; it was half-lighted, and there were perhaps some fifty people, holders of Probe-tickets, seated in the parquet.

"You are going to sing well to-night," said von Francius, as he handed me up the steps—"for my sake and your own, *nicht wahr?*"

"I will try," said I, looking round the great orchestra, and seeing how full it was—so many fresh faces, both in chorus and orchestra.

And as I looked, I saw Courvoisier come in by the little door at the top of the orchestra steps, and descend to his place. His face was clouded—very clouded; I had never

seen him look thus before. He had no smile for those who greeted him. As he took his place beside Helfen, and the latter asked him some question, he stared absently at him, then answered with a look of absence and weariness.

"Herr Courvoisier," said von Francius—and I, being near, heard the whole dialogue, "you always allow yourself to be waited for."

Courvoisier glanced up. I, with a new, sudden interest, watched the behavior of the two men. In the face of von Francius I thought to discover dislike, contempt.

"I beg your pardon; I was detained," answered Courvoisier composedly.

"It is unfortunate that you should be so often detained at the time when your work should be beginning."

Unmoved and unchanging, Courvoisier heard and submitted to the words, and to the tone in which they were spoken—sarcastic, sneering, and unbelieving.

"Now we will begin," pursued von Francius, with a disagreeable smile, as he rapped with his bâton upon the rail. I looked at Courvoisier—looked at his friend, Friedhelm Helfen. The former was sitting as quietly as possible, rather pale, and with the same clouded look, but not deeper than before; the latter was flushed, and eyed von Francius with no friendly glance.

There seemed a kind of slumbering storm in the air. There was none of the lively discussion usual at the Proben. Courvoisier, first of the first violins, and from whom all the others seemed to take their tone, sat silent, grave, and

still. Von Francius, though quiet, was biting. I felt afraid of him. Something must have happened to put him into that evil mood.

My part did not come until late in the second part of the oratorio. I had almost forgotten that I was to sing at all, and was watching von Francius, and listening to his sharp speeches. I remembered what Anna Sartorius had said in describing this Hauptprobe to me. It was all just as she had said. He was severe; his speeches roused the phlegmatic blood, set the professional instrumentalists laughing at their amateur co-operators, but provoked no reply or resentment. It was extraordinary, the effect of this man's will upon those he had to do with—upon women in particular.

There was one haughty-looking blonde—a Swede—tall, majestic, with long yellow curls, and a face full of pride and high temper, who gave herself decided airs, and trusted to her beauty and insolence to carry off certain radical defects of harshness of voice and want of ear. I never forgot how she stared me down from head to foot on the occasion of my first appearance alone, as if to say, "What do *you* want here?"

It was in vain that she looked haughty and handsome. Addressing her as Fräulein Hülström, von Francius gave her a sharp lecture, imitating the effect of her voice in a particularly soft passage with ludicrous accuracy. The rest of the chorus was tittering audibly, the musicians, with the exception of Courvoisier and his friend, nudging each other and smiling. She bridled haughtily, flashed a furi-

ous glance at her mentor, grew crimson, received a sarcastic smile which baffled her, and subsided again.

So it was with them all. His blame was plentiful; his praise so rare as to be almost an unknown quantity. His chorus and orchestra were famed for the minute perfection and precision of their play and singing. Perhaps the performance lacked something else—passion, color. Von Francius, at that time at least, was no genius, though his talent, his power, and his method were undeniably great. He was, however, not popular—not the Harold, the "beloved leader" of his people.

It was to-night that I was first shown how all was not smooth for him; that in this art union there were splits—"little rifts within the lute," which, should they extend, might literally in the end "make the music mute." I heard whispers around me. "Herr von Francius is angry." "*Nicht wahr?*" "Herr Courvoisier looks angry too." "Yes, he does." "There will be an open quarrel there soon." "I think so." "They are both clever: one should be less clever than the other." "They are so opposed." "Yes. They say Courvoisier has a party of his own, and that all the orchestra are on his side." "*So!*" in accents of curiosity and astonishment. "*Ja wol!*" And that if von Francius does not mind, he will see Herr Courvoisier in his place, etc., etc., without end. All which excited me much, as the first glimpse into the affairs of those about whom we think much and know little (a form of life well known to women in general) always does interest us.

These things made me forget to be nervous or anxious. I saw myself now as part of the whole, a unit in the sum of a life which interested me. Von Francius gave me a sign of approval when I had finished, but it was a mechanical one. He was thinking of other things.

The Probe was over. I walked slowly down the room looking for Anna Sartorius, more out of politeness than because I wished for her company. I was relieved to find that she had already gone, probably not finding all the entertainment she expected, and I was able, with a good conscience, to take my way home alone.

My way home! not yet. I was to live through something before I could take my way home.

I went out of the large saal, through the long veranda, into the street. A flood of moonlight silvered it. There was a laughing, chattering crowd about me—all the chorus; men and girls, going to their homes or their lodgings, in ones or twos, or in large cheerful groups. Almost opposite the *Tonhalle* was a tall house, one of a row, and of this house the lowest floor was used as a shop for antiquities, curiosities, and a thousand odds and ends useful or beautiful to artists; costumes, suits of armor, old china, anything and everything. The window was yet lighted. As I paused for a moment before taking my homeward way, I saw two men cross the moonlit street and go in at the open door of the shop. One was Courvoisier; in the other I thought to recognize Friedhelm Helfen, but was not quite sure about it. They did not go into the shop, as I saw by the bright large lamp that burned within, but along the

passage and up the stairs. I followed them, resolutely beating down shyness, unwillingness, timidity. My reluctant steps took me to the window of the antiquity shop, and I stood looking in before I could make up my mind to enter. Bits of rococo ware stood in the window, majolica jugs, chased metal dishes and bowls, bits of renaissance-work, tapestry, carpet, a helm with the visor up, gaping at me as if tired of being there. I slowly drew my purse from my pocket, put together three thalers and a ten-groschen piece, and with lingering, unwilling steps entered the shop. A pretty young woman in a quaint dress, which somehow harmonized with the place, came forward. She looked at me as if wondering what I could possibly want. My very agitation gave calmness to my voice as I inquired:

"Does Herr Courvoisier, a *Musiker*, live here?"

"*Ja wol!*" answered the young woman, with a look of still greater surprise. "On the third *étage*, straight upstairs. The name is on the door."

I turned away, and went slowly up the steep wooden uncarpeted staircase. On the first landing a door opened at the sound of my footsteps, and a head was popped out —a rough, fuzzy head, with a pale eager-looking face under the bush of hair.

"Ugh!" said the owner of this amiable visage, and shut the door with a bang. I looked at the plate upon it; it bore the legend, *Hermann Duntze, Maler*. To the second *étage*. Another door—another plate: *Bernhard Knoop, Maler*. The house seemed to be a resort of artists. There was a lamp burning on each landing: and now, at last, with

breath and heart alike failing, I ascended the last flight of stairs, and found myself upon the highest *étage*, before another door, on which was roughly painted up *Eugen Courvoisier*. I looked at it with my heart beating suffocatingly. Some one had scribbled in red chalk beneath the Christian name, *Prinz Eugen, der edle Ritter*. Had it been done in jest or earnest? I wondered, and then knocked. Such a knock!

"*Herein!*"

I opened the door, and stepped into a large, long, low room. On the table, in the centre, burnt a lamp, and sitting there, with the light falling upon his earnest young face, was Helfen, the violinist, and near to him sat Courvoisier, with a child upon his knee, a little lad with immense dark eyes, tumbled black hair, and flushed, just awakened face. He was clad in his night-dress and a little red dressing-gown, and looked like a spot of almost feverish, quite tropic brightness, in contrast with the grave, pale face which bent over him. Courvoisier held the two delicate little hands in one of his own, and was looking down with love unutterable upon the beautiful, dazzling child-face. Despite the different complexion and a different style of feature too, there was so great a likeness in the two faces, particularly in the broad, noble brow, as to leave no doubt of the relationship. My musician and the boy were father and son.

Courvoisier looked up as I came in. For one half moment there leaped into his eyes a look of surprise and of something more. If it had lasted a second longer I

could have sworn it was welcome—then it was gone. He rose, handed the child over to Helfen, saying, "One moment, Friedel," then turned to me as to some stranger who had come on an errand as yet unknown to him, and did not speak. The little one, from Helfen's knee, stared at me with large, solemn eyes, and Helfen himself looked scarcely less impressed.

I have no doubt I looked frightened—I felt so—frightened out of my senses. I came tremulously forward, and offering my pieces of silver, said in the smallest voice which I had ever used:

"I have come to pay my debt. I did not know where you lived, or I should have done it long before."

He made no motion to take the money, but said—I almost started, so altered was the voice from that of my frank companion at Köln, to an icy coldness of ceremony:

"*Mein Fräulein*, I do not understand."

"You—you—the things you paid for. Do you not remember me?"

"Remember a lady who has intimated that she wishes me to forget her? No, I do not."

What a horribly complicated revenge! thought I, as I said, ever lower and lower, more and more shamefacedly, while the young violinist sat with the child on his knee, and his soft brown eyes staring at me in wonder:

"I think you must remember. You helped me at Köln, and you paid for my ticket to Elberthal, and for something that I had at the hotel. You told me that was what I owed you."



I again tendered the money; again he made no effort to receive it, but said:

"I am sorry that I do not understand to what you refer. I only know it is impossible that I could ever have told you you owed me three thaler, or three anything, or that there could, under any circumstances, be any question of money between you and me. Suppose we consider the topic at an end."

Such a voice of ice, and such a manner, to chill the boldest heart, I had never yet encountered. The cool, unspeakable disdain cut me to the quick.

"You have no right to refuse the money," said I desperately. "You have no right to insult me by—by——" An appropriate peroration refused itself.

Again the sweet, proud, courteous smile: not only courteous, but courtly; again the icy little bow of the head, which would have done credit to a prince in displeasure, and which yet had the deference due from a gentleman to a lady.

"You will excuse the semblance of rudeness which may appear if I say that if you unfortunately are not of a very decided disposition, I am. It is impossible that I should ever have the slightest intercourse with a lady who has once unequivocally refused my acquaintance. The lady may honor me by changing her mind; I am sorry that I cannot respond. I do not change mine."

"You *must* let us part on equal terms," I reiterated. "It is unjust——"

"Yourself closed all possibility of the faintest attempt

at further acquaintance, *mein Fräulein*. The matter is at an end."

"Herr Courvoisier, I——"

"At an end," he repeated calmly, gently, looking at me as he had often looked at me since the night of *Lohengrin*, with a glance that baffled and chilled me.

"I wished to apologize——"

"For what?" he inquired, with the faintest possible look of indifferent surprise.

"For my rudeness—my surprise—I——"

"You refer to one evening at the opera. You exercised your privilege, as a lady, of closing an acquaintance which you did not wish to renew. I now exercise mine, as a gentleman, of saying that I choose to abide by that decision, now, and always."

I was surprised. Despite my own apologetic frame of mind, I was surprised at his hardness; at the narrowness and ungenerosity which could so determinedly shut the door in the face of an humble penitent like me. He *must* see how I had repented the stupid slip I had made: he must see how I desired to atone for it. It was not a slip of the kind one would name irreparable, and yet he behaved to me as if I had committed a crime; froze me with looks and words. Was he so self-conscious and so vain that he could not get over that small slight to his self-consequence, committed in haste and confusion by an ignorant girl? Even *then*, even in that moment I asked myself these questions, my astonishment being almost as great as my pain, for it was the very reverse, the *very* opposite of what I had

pictured to myself. Once let me see him and speak to him, I had said to myself, and it would be all right; every lineament of his face, every tone of his voice, bespoke a frank, generous nature—one that could forgive. Alas! and alas! this was the truth!

He had come to the door; he stood by it now, holding it open, looking at me so courteously, so deferentially, with a manner of one who had been a gentleman and lived with gentlemen all his life, but in a way which at the same time ordered me out as plainly as possible.

I went to the door. I could no longer stand under that chilling glance, nor endure the cool, polished contempt of the manner. I behaved by no means heroically; neither flung my head back, nor muttered any defiance, nor in any way proved myself a person of spirit. All I could do was to look appealingly into his face; to search the bright, steady eyes, without finding in them any hint of softening or relenting.

"Will you not take it, *please?*" I asked in a quivering voice and with trembling lips.

"Impossible, *mein Fräulein*," with the same chilly little bow as before.

Struggling to repress my tears, I said no more, but passed out, cut to the heart. The door was closed gently behind me. I felt as if it had closed upon a bright belief of my youth. I leaned for a moment against the passage wall, and pressed my hand against my eyes. From within came the sound of a child's voice, "Papa," and the soft, deep murmur of Eugen's answer; then I went downstairs and into the open street.

That hated, hateful three thaler ten groschen were still clasped in my hand. What was I to do with it? Throw it into the Rhine, and wash it away for ever? Give it to some one in need? Fling it into the gutter? Send it him by post? I dismissed that idea for what it was worth. No: I would obey his prohibition. I would keep it—those very coins, and when I felt inclined to be proud and conceited about anything on my own account, or disposed to put down superhuman charms to the account of others, I would go and look at them, and they would preach me eloquent sermons.

As I went into the house, up the stairs to my room, the front door opened again, and Anna Sartorius overtook me.

"I thought you had left the Probe?" said I, staring at her.

"So I had, *Herzchen*," said she, with her usual ambiguous, mocking laugh; "but I was not compelled to come home, like a good little girl, the moment I came out of the *Tonhalle*. I have been visiting a friend. But where have *you* been, for the Probe must have been over for some time? We heard the people go past: indeed, some of them were staying in the house where I was. Did you take a walk in the moonlight?"

"Good-night," said I, too weary and too indifferent even to answer her.

"It must have been a tiring walk: you seem weary, quite *ermüdet*," said she mockingly, and I made no answer.

"A *Hauptprobe* is a dismal thing, after all," she called out to me from the top of the stairs.

From my inmost heart I agreed with her.



CHAPTER VIII

KAFFEEKLATSCH

"*Phillis.* I want none o' thy friendship!
Lesbia. Then take my enmity!"

"WHEN a number of ladies meet together to discuss matters of importance, we call it 'Kaffeeklatsch,'" Courvoisier had said to me on that never-forgotten afternoon of my adventure at Köln.

It was my first Kaffeeklatsch which, in a measure, decided my destiny. Hitherto, that is, up to the end of June, I had not been at any entertainment of this kind. At last there came an invitation to Frau Steinmann and to Anna Sartorius, to assist at a "Coffee" of unusual magnitude, and Frau Steinmann suggested that I should go with them and see what it was like. Nothing loath, I consented.

"Bring some work," said Anna Sartorius to me, "or you will find it *langweilig*—slow, I mean."

"Shall we not have some music?"

"Music, yes, the sweetest of all—that of our own tongues. You shall hear every one's candid opinion of every one else—present company always excepted, and you will see what the state of Elberthal society really is—present company still excepted. By a very strange chance the ladies who meet at a Klatsch are always good, pious, virtuous, and, above all, charitable. It is wonderful how well we manage to keep the black sheep out, and have nothing but lambs immaculate."

"Oh, don't!"

"Oh, bah! I know the Elberthal *Klatscherei*. It has picked me to pieces many a time. After you have partaken to-day of its coffee and its cakes, it will pick *you* to pieces."

"But," said I, arranging the ruffles of my very best frock, which I had been told it was *de rigueur* to wear, "I thought women never gossiped so much amongst men."

Fräulein Sartorius laughed loud and long.

"The men! *Du meine Güte!* Men at a Kaffeeklatsch! Show me the one that a man dare even look into, and I'll crown you—and him too—with laurel, and bay, and the wild parsley. A man at a Kaffee—*mag Gott ihn davor bewahren!*"

"Oh!" said I, half disappointed, and with a very poor, mean sense of dissatisfaction at having put on my pretty new dress for the first time only for the edification of a number of virulent gossips.

"Men!" she reiterated with a harsh laugh as we walked towards the Goldsteinstrasse, our destination. "Men—no. We despise their company, you see. We only talk about them directly, or indirectly, from the moment of meeting to that of parting."

"I'm sorry there are no gentlemen," said I, and I was. I felt I looked well.

Arrived at the scene of the Kaffee, we were conducted to a bedroom where we laid aside our hats and mantles. I was standing before the glass, drawing a comb through my upturned hair, and contemplating with irrepressible satisfaction the delicate lavender hue of my dress, when I suddenly saw reflected behind me, the dark, harshly-cut face of Anna Sartorius. She started slightly; then said, with a laugh which had in it something a little forced:

"We are a contrast, aren't we? Beauty and the beast, one might almost say. *Na! 's schad't nix.*"

I turned away in a little offended pride. Her familiarity annoyed me. What if she were a thousand times cleverer, wittier, better read than I? I did not like her. A shade crossed her face.

"Is it that you are thoroughly unamiable?" said she, in a voice which had reproach in it, "or are all English girls so touchy that they receive a compliment upon their good looks as if it were an offence?"

"I wish you would not talk of my 'good looks' as if I were a dog or a horse!" said I angrily. "I hate to be flattered. I am no beauty, and do not wish to be treated as if I were."

"Do you always hate it?" said she from the window,

whither she had turned. "Ach! there goes Herr Courvoisier!"

The name startled me like a sudden report. I made an eager step forward before I had time to recollect myself — then stopped.

"He is not out of sight yet," said she, with a curious look, "if you wish to see him."

I sat down and made no answer. What prompted her to talk in such a manner? Was it a mere coincidence?

"He is a handsome fellow, *nicht wahr?*" she said, still watching me, while I thought Frau Steinmann never would manage to arrange her cap in the style that pleased her. "But a *Taugenichts* all the same," pursued Anna, as I did not speak. "Don't you think so?" she added.

"A *Taugenichts*—I don't know what that is."

"What you call a good-for-nothing."

"Oh."

"*Nicht wahr?*" she persisted.

"I know nothing about it."

"I do. I will tell you all about him sometime."

"I don't wish to know anything about him."

"So!" said she, with a laugh.

Without further word or look I followed Frau Steinmann downstairs.

The lady of the house was seated in the midst of a large concourse of old and young ladies, holding her own with a well-seasoned hardihood in the midst of the awful Babel of tongues. What a noise! It smote upon and stunned my confounded ear. Our hostess advanced and led me with a

wave of the hand into the centre of the room, when she introduced me to about a dozen ladies; and every one in the room stopped talking and working, and stared at me intently and unwinkingly until my name had been pronounced, after which some continued still to stare at me, and others audibly repeated or attempted to repeat my name, commenting openly upon it. Meanwhile I was conducted to a sofa at the end of the room, and requested in a set phrase, "*Bitte, Fräulein, nehmen Sie Platz auf dem Sofa*," with which long custom has since made me familiar, to take my seat upon it. I humbly tried to decline the honor, but Anna Sartorius behind me whispered:

"Sit down directly, unless you want to be thought an outer barbarian. The place has been kept for you."

Deeply impressed, and very uncomfortable, I sat down. First one and then another came and spoke and talked to me. Their questions and remarks were very much in this style:

"Do you like Elberthal? What is your Christian name? How old are you? Have you been or are you engaged to be married? They break off engagements in England for a mere trifle, don't they? *Schrecklich!* Did you get your dress in Elberthal? What did it cost the *elle?* Young English ladies wear silk much more than young German ladies. You never go to the theatre on Sunday in England—you are all *pietistisch*. How beautifully you speak our language! Really no foreign accent!" (This repeatedly and unblushingly, in spite of my most flagrant mistakes, and in the face of my most

feeble, halting, and stammering efforts to make myself understood.) "Do you learn music? singing? From whom? Herrn von Francius? Ach, *so!*" (Pause, while they all look impressively at me. The very name of von Francius calls up emotions of no common order.) "I believe I have seen you at the Proben to the *Paradise Lost*. Perhaps you are the lady who is to take the solos? Yes! *Du lieber Himmel!* What do you think of Herr von Francius? Is he not nice?" (*Nett*, though, signifies something feminine and finikin.) "No? How odd! There is no accounting for the tastes of Englishwomen. Do you know many people in Elberthal? No? *Schade!* No officers? not Hauptmann Sachse?" (with voice growing gradually shriller), "nor Lieutenant Pieper? *Not* know Lieutenant Pieper! *Um Gotteswillen!* What do you mean? He *is* so handsome! such eyes! such a moustache! *Herrgott!* And you do not know him? I will tell you something. When he went off to the autumn manœuvres at Frankfurt (I have it on good authority), twenty young ladies went to see him off."

"*Disgusting!*" I exclaimed, unable to control my feelings any longer. I saw Anna Sartorius malignantly smiling as she rocked herself in an American rocking-chair.

"How! disgusting? You are joking. He had dozens of bouquets. All the girls are in love with him. They compelled the photographer to sell them his photograph, and they all believe he is in love with them. I believe Luise Breidenstein will die if he doesn't propose to her."

"They ought to be ashamed of themselves."



"But he is so handsome, so delightful. He dances divinely, and knows such good riddles, and acts—*ach, himmlisch!*"

"But how absurd to make such a fuss about him!" I cried, hot and indignant. "The idea of going on so about a *man!*"

A chorus, a shriek, a Babel of expostulations.

"*Hör 'mal! Thekla!* Fräulein does not know Lieutenant Pieper, and does not think it right to *schwärm* for him."

"The darling! No one can help it who knows him!" said another.

"Let her wait till she does know him," said Thekla, a sentimental young woman, pretty in a certain sentimental way, and graceful too—also sentimentally—with the sentiment that lingers about young ladies' albums with leaves of smooth, various-hued note-paper, and about the sonnets which nestle within the same. There was a sudden shriek:

"There he goes! There is the Herr Lieutenant riding by. *Kommen Sie 'mal her, Fräulein!* See him! Judge for yourself!"

A strange hand dragged me, whether I would or no, to the window, and pointed out to me the Herr Lieutenant riding by. An adorable creature in a Hussar uniform; he had pink cheeks and a straight nose, and the loveliest little model of a moustache ever seen; tightly curling black hair, and the dearest little feet and hands imaginable.

"Oh, the dear, handsome, delightful fellow!" cried

one enthusiastic young creature, who had scrambled upon a chair in the background and was gazing after him, while another, behind me, murmured in tones of emotion:

"Look how he salutes—*divine*, isn't it?"

I turned away, smiling an irrepressible smile. My musician, with his ample traits and clear, bold eyes, would have looked a wild, rough, untamable creature by the side of that wax-doll beauty—that pretty little being who had just ridden by. I thought I saw them side by side—Herr Lieutenant Pieper and Eugen Courvoisier. The latter would have been as much more imposing than the former as an oak is more imposing than a spruce fir—as Gluck than Lortzing. And could these enthusiastic young ladies have viewed the two they would have been true to their lieutenant; so much was certain. They would have said that the other was a wild man, who did not cut his hair often enough, who had large hands, whose collar was perhaps chosen more with a view to ease and the free movement of the throat than to the smallest number of inches within which it was possible to confine that throat; who did not wear polished kid boots, and was not seen off from the station by twenty devoted admirers of the opposite sex, was not deluged with bouquets. With a feeling as of singing at my heart I went back to my place, smiling still.

"See! she is quite charmed with the Herr Lieutenant! Is he not delightful?"

"Oh, very; so is a Dresden-china shepherd, but if you let him fall he breaks."

"*Wie komisch!* how odd!" was the universal comment upon my eccentricity. The conversation then wandered off to other military stars, all of whom were *reizend, hübsch* or *nett*. So it went on until I got heartily tired of it, and then the ladies discussed their female neighbors, but I leave that branch of the subject to the intelligent reader. It was the old tune with the old variations, which were rattled over in the accustomed manner. I listened, half curious, half appalled, and thought of various speeches made by Anna Sartorius. Whether she were amiable or not, she had certainly a keen insight into the hearts and motives of her fellow-creatures. Perhaps the gift had soured her.

Anna and I walked home alone. Frau Steinmann was, with other elderly ladies of the company, to spend the evening there. As we walked down the Königsallée—how well, to this day, do I remember it! the chestnuts were beginning to fade, the road was dusty, the sun setting gloriously, the people thronging in crowds—she said suddenly, quietly, and in a tone of the utmost composure:

"So you don't admire Lieutenant Pieper so much as Herrn Courvoisier?"

"What do you mean?" I cried, astonished, alarmed, and wondering what unlucky chance led her to talk to me of Eugen.

"I mean what I say; and for my part I agree with you—partly. Courvoisier, bad though he may be, is a man; the other a mixture of doll and puppy."

She spoke in a friendly tone; discursive, as if inviting

confidence and comment on my part. I was not inclined to give either. I shrank with morbid nervousness from owning to any knowledge of Eugen. My pride, nay, my very self-esteem, bled whenever I thought of him or heard him mentioned. Above all, I shrank from the idea of discussing him, or anything pertaining to him, with Anna Sartorius.

"It will be time for you to agree with me when I give you anything to agree about," said I coldly. "I know nothing of either of the gentlemen, and wish to know nothing."

There was a pause. Looking up, I found Anna's eyes fixed upon my face, amazed, reproachful. I felt myself blushing fiercely. My tongue had led me astray; I had lied to her: I knew it.

"Do not say you know nothing of *either* of the gentlemen. Herr Courvoisier was your first acquaintance in Elberthal."

"What?" I cried, with a great leap of the heart, for I felt as if a veil had suddenly been rent away from before my eyes, and I shown a precipice.

"I saw you arrive with Herr Courvoisier," said Anna calmly; "at least, I saw you come from the platform with him, and he put you into a droschke. And I saw you cut him at the opera; and I saw you go into his house after the *Generalprobe*. Will you tell me again that you know nothing of him? I should have thought you too proud to tell lies."

"I wish you would mind your own business," said I, heartily wishing that Anna Sartorius were at the antipodes.

"Listen!" said she very earnestly, and, I remember it now, though I did not heed it then, with wistful kindness. "I do not bear malice—you are so young and inexperienced. I wish you were more friendly, but I care for you too much to be rebuffed by a trifle. I will tell you about Courvoisier."

"Thank you," said I hastily, "I beg you will do no such thing."

"I know his story. I can tell you the truth about him."

"I decline to discuss the subject," said I, thinking of Eugen, and passionately refusing the idea of discussing him, gossiping about him, with any one.

Anna looked surprised; then a look of anger crossed her face.

"You cannot be in earnest," said she.

"I assure you I am. I wish you would leave me alone," I said, exasperated beyond endurance.

"You don't wish to know what I can tell you about him?"

"No, I don't. What is more, if you begin talking to me about him, I will put my fingers in my ears, and leave you."

"Then you may learn it for yourself," said she suddenly, in a voice little more than a whisper. "You shall rue your treatment of me. And when you know the lesson by heart, then you will be sorry."

"You are officious and impertinent," said I, white with ire. "I don't wish for your society, and will say good-evening to you."

With that I turned down a side street leading into the Alléestrasse, and left her.

CHAPTER IX

"So!
Another chapter read; with doubtful hand
I turn the page; with doubtful eye I scan
The heading of the next."

From that evening Anna let me alone, as I thought, and I was glad of it; nor did I attempt any reconciliation, for the very good reason that I wished for none.

Soon after our dispute I found upon my plate at breakfast, one morning, a letter directed in a bold, though unformed hand, which I recognized as Stella's:

"Dear May,

"I dare say Adelaide will be writing to you, but I will take time by the forelock, so to speak, and give you *my* views on the subject first.

"There is news, strange to say there is some news to tell you. I shall give it without making any remarks. I shall not say whether I think it good, bad, or indifferent. Adelaide is engaged to Sir Peter Le Marchant. It was only made known two days ago. Adelaide thinks he is in love with her. What a strange mistake for *her* to make! She thinks she can do anything with him. Also a monstrous misapprehension on her part. Seriously, May, I am rather uncomfortable about it, or should be, if it were any one else but Adelaide. But she knows so remarkably well what she is about, that perhaps, after all, my fears are needless. And yet—but it is no use speculating about it—I said I wouldn't.

"She is a queer girl. I don't know how she *can* marry Sir Peter, I must say. I suppose he is awfully rich, and Adelaide has always said that poverty was the most horrible

thing in the world. I don't know, I'm sure. I should be inclined to say that Sir Peter was the most horrible thing in the world. Write soon, and tell me what you think about it.

"Thine, speculatively,

"STELLA WEDDERBURN."

I did not feel surprise at this letter. Foreboding, grief, shame, I did experience at finding that Adelaide was bent upon her own misery. But then, I reflected, she cannot be very sensible to misery, or she would not be able to go through with such a purpose. I went upstairs to communicate this news to Miss Hallam. Soon the rapid movement of events in my own affairs completely drove thoughts of Adelaide for a time, at least, out of my mind.

Miss Hallam received the information quietly and with a certain contemptuous indifference. I knew she did not like Adelaide, and I spoke of her as seldom as possible.

I took up some work, glancing at the clock, for I expected von Francius soon, to give me my lesson, and Miss Hallam sat still. I had offered to read to her, and she had declined. I glanced at her now and then. I had grown accustomed to that sarcastic, wrinkled, bitter face, and did not dislike it. Indeed, Miss Hallam had given me abundant proofs that, eccentric though she might be, pessimist in theory, merciless upon human nature, which she spoke of in a manner which sometimes absolutely appalled me, yet in fact, in deed, she was a warm-hearted, generous woman. She had dealt bountifully by me, and I knew she loved me, though she never said so.

"May," she presently remarked, "yesterday, when you were out, I saw Dr. Mittendorf."

"Did you, Miss Hallam?"

"Yes. He says it is useless my remaining here any longer. I shall never see, and an operation might cost me my life."

Half stunned, and not yet quite taking in the whole case, I held my work suspended, and looked at her. She went on:

"I knew it would be so when I came. I don't intend to try any more experiments. I shall go home next week."

Now I grasped the truth.

"Go home, Miss Hallam!" I repeated faintly.

"Yes; of course. There is no reason why I should stay, is there?"

"N—no, I suppose not," I admitted; and contrived to stammer out, "and I am very sorry that Dr. Mittendorf thinks you will not be better."

Then I left the room quickly—I could not stay, I was overwhelmed. It was scarcely ten minutes since I had come upstairs to her. I could have thought it was a week.

Outside the room, I stood on the landing with my hand pressed to my forehead, for I felt somewhat bewildered. Stella's letter was still in my hand. As I stood there Anna Sartorius came past.

"*Guten Tag, Fräulein*," said she, with a mocking kind of good-nature, when she had observed me for a few minutes. "What is the matter? Are you ill? Have you had bad news?"

"Good-morning, Fräulein," I answered quietly enough, dropping my hand from my brow.

I went to my room. A maid was there, and the furniture might have stood as a type of chaos. I turned away, and went to the empty room in which my piano stood, and where I had my music lessons. I sat down upon a stool in the middle of the room, folded my hands in my lap, and endeavored to realize what had happened—what was going to happen. There rang in my head nothing but the words, "I am going home next week."

Home again! What a blank yawned before me at the idea! Leave Elberthal—leave this new life which had just begun to grow real to me! Leave it—go away; be whirled rapidly away back to Skernford—away from this vivid life, away from—Eugen. I drew a long breath, as the wretched ignominious idea intruded itself, and I knew now what it was that gave terror to the prospect before me. My heart quailed and fainted at the bare idea of such a thing. Hobson's choice alone was open to me. There was no alternative—I must go. I sat still, and felt myself growing gradually stiller and graver and colder as I looked mentally to every side of my horizon, and found it so bounded—myself shut in so fast.

There was nothing for it but to return home, and spend the rest of my life at Skernford. I was in a mood in which I could smile. I smiled at the idea of myself growing older and older, and this six weeks that I had spent fading back and back into the distance, and the people into whose lives I had had a cursory glance going on their way, and

soon forgetting my existence. Truly, Anna! if you were anxious for me to be miserable, this moment, could you know it, should be sweet to you!

My hands clasped themselves more closely upon my lap, and I sat staring at nothing, vaguely, until a shadow before me caused me to look up. Without my knowing it, von Francius had come in, and was standing by, looking at me.

"Good-morning!" said I, with a vast effort, partially collecting my scattered thoughts.

"Are you ready for your lesson, *mein Fraulein?*"

"N—no. I think, Herr Direktor, I will not take any lesson to-day, if you will excuse it."

"But why? Are you ill?"

"No," said I. "At least—perhaps I want to accustom myself to do without music-lessons."

"So?"

"Yes, and without many other pleasant things," said I, dryly and decidedly.

"I do not understand," said he, putting his hat down, and leaning one elbow upon the piano, whilst his deep eyes fixed themselves upon my face, and, as usual, began to compel my secrets from me.

"I am going home," said I.

A quick look of feeling—whether astonishment, regret, or dismay, I should not like to have said—flashed across his face.

"Have you had bad news?"

"Yes, very. Miss Hallam returns to England next week."

"But why do you go? Why not remain here?"

"Gladly, if I had any money," I said, with a dry smile. "But I have none, and cannot get any."

"You will return to England *now?* Do you know what you are giving up?"

"Obligation has no choice," said I gracefully. "I would give *anything* if I could stay here, and not go home again." And with that I burst into tears. I covered my face with my hands, and all the pent-up grief and pain of the coming parting streamed from my eyes. I wept uncontrollably.

He did not interrupt my tears for some time. When he did speak, it was in a very gentle voice.

"Miss Wedderburn, will you try to compose yourself, and listen to something I have to say?"

I looked up. I saw his eyes fixed seriously and kindly upon me, with an expression quite apart from their usual indifferent coolness—with the look of one friend to another—with such a look as I had seen and have since seen exchanged between Courvoisier and his friend Helfen.

"See," said he, "I take an interest in you, Fräulein May. Why should I hesitate to say so? You are young—you do not know the extent of your own strength, or of your own weakness. I do. I will not flatter—it is not my way—as I think you know."

I smiled. I remembered the plentiful blame and the scant praise which it had often fallen to my lot to receive from him.

"I am a strict, sarcastic, disagreeable old pedagogue,

as you and so many of my other fair pupils consider," he went on, and I looked up in amaze. I knew that so many of his "fair pupils" considered him exactly the reverse.

"It is my business to know whether a voice is good for anything or not. Now yours, with training, will be good for a great deal. Have you the means, or the chance, or the *possibility* of getting that training in England?"

"No."

"I should like to help you, partly from the regard I have for you, partly for my own sake, because I think you would do me credit."

He paused. I was looking at him with all my senses concentrated upon what he had said. He had been talking round the subject until he saw that he had fairly fixed my attention; then he said, sharply and rapidly:

"Fräulein, it lies with you to choose. Will you go home and stagnate there, or will you remain here, fight down your difficulties, and become a worthy artiste?"

"Can there be any question as to which I should *like* to do?" said I, distracted at the idea of having to give up the prospect he held out. "But it is impossible. Miss Hallam alone can decide."

"But if Miss Hallam consented, you would remain?"

"Oh! Herr von Francius! You should soon see whether I would remain!"

"*Also!* Miss Hallam *shall* consent. Now to our singing!"

I stood up. A singular apathy had come over me: I felt no longer my old self. I had a kind of confidence in

von Francius, and yet—— Despite my recent trouble, I felt now a lightness and freedom, and a perfect ability to cast aside all anxieties, and turn to the business of the moment—my singing. I had never sung better. Von Francius condescended to say that I had done well. Then he rose.

"Now I am going to have a private interview with Miss Hallam," said he, smiling. "I am always having private interviews with her, *nicht wahr?* Nay, Fräulein May, do not let your eyes fill with tears. Have confidence in yourself and your destiny, as I have."

With that he was gone, leaving me to practise. How very kind von Francius was to me, I thought—not in the least the kind of man people called him, I had great confidence in him—in his will. I almost believed that he would know the right thing to say to Miss Hallam to get her to let me stay; but then, suppose she were willing, I had no possible means of support. Tired of conjecturing upon a subject upon which I was so utterly in the dark, I soon ceased that foolish pursuit. An hour had passed, when I heard von Francius' step, which I knew quite well, come down the stairs. My heart beat, but I could not move.

Would he pass, or would he come and speak to me? He paused. His hand was on the lock. That was he, standing before me, with a slight smile. He did not look like a man defeated—but then, *could* he look like a man defeated? My idea of him was that he held his own way calmly, and that circumstances respectfully bowed to him.

"The day is gained," said he, and paused; but before I could speak he went on:

"Go to Miss Hallam; be kind to her. It is hard for her to part from you, and she has behaved like a Spartan. I felt quite sorry to have to give her so much pain."

Much wondering what could have passed between them, I left von Francius silently, and sought Miss Hallam.

"Are you there, May?" said she. "What have you been doing all morning?"

"Practising—and having my lesson."

"Practising—and having your lesson—exactly what I have been doing. Practising giving up my own wishes, and taking a lesson in the art of persuasion, by being myself persuaded. Your singing-master is a wonderful man. He has made me act against my principles."

"Miss Hallam——"

"You were in great trouble this morning when you heard you were to leave Elberthal. I knew it instantly. However, you shall not go unless you choose. You shall stay."

Wondering, I held my tongue.

"Herr von Francius has showed me my duty."

"Miss Hallam," said I suddenly, "I will do whatever you wish. After your kindness to me, you have the right to dispose of my doings. I shall be *glad* to do as you wish."

"Well," said she composedly, "I wish you to write a letter to your parents, which I will dictate; of course they must be consulted. Then, if they consent, I intend to

provide you with the means of carrying on your studies in Elberthal under Herr von Francius."

I almost gasped. Miss Hallam, who had been a byword in Skernford, and in our own family, for eccentricity and stinginess, was indeed heaping coals of fire upon my head. I tried, weakly, and ineffectually, to express my gratitude to her, and at last said:

"You may trust me never to abuse your kindness, Miss Hallam."

"I have trusted you ever since you refused Sir Peter Le Marchant, and were ready to leave your home to get rid of him," said she, with grim humor.

She then told me that she had settled everything with von Francius, even that I was to remove to different lodgings, more suited for a solitary student than Frau Steinmann's busy house.

"And," she added, "I shall ask Dr. Mittendorf to have an eye to you now and then, and to write to me of how you go on."

I could not find many words in which to thank her. The feeling that I was *not* going, did *not* need to leave at all, filled my heart with a happiness as deep as it was unfounded and unreasonable.

At my next lesson von Francius spoke to me of the future.

"I want you to be a real student—no play one," said he, "or you will never succeed. And for that reason I told Miss Hallam that you had better leave this house. There are too many distractions. I am going to put you in a very different place."

"Where? In which part of the town?"

"Wehrhahn, 39, is the address," said he.

I was not quite sure where that was, but did not ask further, for I was occupied in helping Miss Hallam, and wished to be with her as much as I could before she left.

The day of parting came, as come it must. Miss Hallam was gone. I had cried, and she had maintained the grim silence which was her only way of expressing emotion.

She was going back home to Skernford, to blindness, now known to be inevitable, to her saddened, joyless life. I was going to remain in Elberthal—for what? When I look back I ask myself—was I not as blind as she, in truth?

In the afternoon of the day of Miss Hallam's departure, I left Frau Steinmann's house. Clara promised to come and see me sometimes. Frau Steinmann kissed me, and called me *liebes Kind*. I got into the cab and directed the driver to go to Wehrhahn, 39. He drove me along one or two streets into the one known as the Schadowstrasse, a long wide street, in which stood the Tonhalle. A little past that building, round a corner, and he stopped, on the same side of the road.

"Not here!" said I, putting my head out of the window when I saw the window of the curiosity shop exactly opposite. "Not here!"

"Wehrhahn, 39, Fräulein."

"Yes."

"This is it."

I stared around. Yes—on the wall stood in plainly-to-be read white letters, *Wehrhahn*, and on the other door of the house, 39. Yielding to a conviction that it was to be, I murmured "*Kismet*," and descended from my chariot.

The woman of the house received me civilly. "The young lady for whom the Herr Direktor had taken lodgings? *Schön!* Please to come this way, Fräulein. The room was on the third étage." I followed her upstairs—steep, dark, narrow stairs, like those of the opposite house. The room was a bare-looking, tolerably large one. There was a little closet of a bedroom opening from it—a scrap of carpet upon the floor, and open windows letting in the air. The woman chatted good-naturedly enough.

"So! I hope the room will suit, Fräulein. It is truly not to be called richly furnished, but one doesn't need that when one is a *Singstudent*. I have had many in my time—ladies and gentlemen too—pupils of Herr von Francius often. *Na!* what if they did make a great noise? I have no children—thank the good God! and one gets used to the screaming just as one gets used to everything else." Here she called me to the window.

"You might have worse prospects than this, Fräulein, and worse neighbors than those over the way. See! there is the old furniture shop where so many of the *Herren Maler* go, and then there is Herr Duntze, the landscape painter, and Herr Knoop who paints *Genrebilder* and does not make much by it—so a picture of a child with a ravelled skein of wool, or a little girl making earrings for herself with bunches of cherries—for my part I don't see

much in them, and wonder that there are people who will lay down good hard thalers for them. Then there is Herr Courvoisier, the *Musiker*—but perhaps you know who he is?"

"Yes," I assented.

"And his little son!" Here she threw up her hands. "Ach! the poor man! There are people who speak against him, and every one knows he and the Herr Direktor are not the best friends, but *sehen Sie wol, Fräulein*, the Herr Direktor is well off, settled, provided for; Herr Courvoisier has his way to make yet, and the world before him; and what sort of a story it may be with the child, I don't know, but this I will say, let those dare to doubt it or question it who will, he is a good father—I know it. And the other young man with Herr Courvoisier—his friend, I suppose—he is a *Musiker* too. I hear them practising a good deal sometimes—things without any air or tune to them: for my part I wonder how they can go on with it. Give me a good song with a tune in it—*Drunten im Unterland*, or *In Berlin, sagt er*, or something one knows. *Na!* I suppose the fiddling all lies in the way of business, and perhaps they can fall asleep over it sometimes, as I do now and then over my knitting, when I'm weary. The young man, Herr Courvoisier's friend, looked ill when they first came; even now he is not to call a robust-looking person—but formerly he looked as if he would go out of the fugue altogether. *Entschuldigen, Fräulein*, if I use a few professional proverbs. My husband, the sainted man! was a piano-tuner by calling, and

I have picked up some of his musical expressions, and use them, more for his sake than any other reason—for I have heard too much music to believe in it so much as ignorant people do. *Nun!* I will send Fräulein her box up, and then I hope she will feel comfortable and at home, and send for whatever she wants."

In a few moments my luggage had come upstairs, and when they who brought it had finally disappeared, I went to the window again and looked out. Opposite, on the same étage, were two windows, corresponding to my two, wide open, letting me see into an empty room, in which there seemed to be books and many sheets of white paper, a music desk and a vase of flowers. I also saw a piano in the clear-obscure, and another door, half open, leading into the inner room. All the inhabitants of the rooms were out. No tone came across to me—no movement of life. But the influence of the absent ones was there. Strange concourse of circumstances which had placed me as the opposite neighbor, in the same profession too, of Eugen Courvoisier! Pure chance it certainly was, for von Francius had certainly had no motive in bringing me hither.

"*Kismet!*" I murmured once again, and wondered what the future would bring.

BOOK III

EUGEN COURVOISIER

CHAPTER I

"He looks his angel in the face
Without a blush; nor heeds disgrace,
Whom nought disgraceful done
Disgraces. Who knows nothing base
Fears nothing known."

It was noon. The Probe to *Tannhäuser* was over, and we, the members of the *Kapelle*, turned out, and stood in a knot around the orchestra entrance to the Elberthal Theatre.

It was a raw October noontide. The last traces of the bygone summer were being swept away by equinoctial gales, which whirled the remaining yellow leaves from the trees, and strowed with them the walks of the deserted *Hofgarten;* a stormy gray sky promised rain at the earliest opportunity; our Rhine went gliding by like a stream of ruffled lead.

"Proper theatre weather," observed one of my fellow-musicians; "but it doesn't seem to suit you, Friedhelm. What makes you look so down?"

I shrugged my shoulders. Existence was not at that time very pleasant to me; my life's hues were somewhat of the color of the autumn skies and of the dull river. I scarcely knew why I stood with the others now; it was more a mechanical pause before I took my spiritless way home, than because I felt any interest in what was going on.

"I should say he will be younger by a long way than old Köhler," observed Karl Linders, one of the violoncellists, a young man with an unfailing flow of good-nature, good spirits, and eagerness to enjoy every pleasure which came in his way, which qualities were the objects of my deep wonder and mild envy. "And they say," he continued, "that he's coming to-night; so Friedhelm, my boy, you may look out. Your master's on the way."

"So!" said I, lending but an indifferent attention: "what is his name?"

"That's his way of gently intimating that he hasn't got no master," said Karl jocosely, but the general answer to my question was, "I don't know."

"But they say," said a tall man who wore spectacles and sat behind me in the first violins—"they say that von Francius doesn't like the appointment. He wanted some one else, but *die Direktion* managed to beat him. He dislikes the new fellow beforehand, whatever he may be."

"So!—Then he will have a roughish time of it!" agreed one or two others.

The "he" of whom they spoke was the coming man who should take the place of leader of the first violins

—it followed that he would be at least an excellent performer—possibly a clever man in many other ways, for the post was in many ways a good one. Our *Kapelle* was no mean one—in our own estimation at any rate. Our late first violinist, who had recently died, had been on visiting terms with persons of the highest respectability, had given lessons to the very best families, and might have been seen bowing to young ladies and important dowagers almost any day. No wonder his successor was speculated about with some curiosity.

"*Alle Wetter!*" cried Karl Linders impatiently—that young man was much given to impatience—"what does von Francius want? he can't have everything. I suppose this new fellow plays a little too well for his taste. He will have to give him a solo now and then, instead of keeping them all for himself."

"*Weiss's nit,*" said another, shrugging his shoulders; "I've only heard that von Francius had a row with the Direction, and was outvoted."

"What a sweet temper he will be in at the Probe to-morrow!" laughed Karl. "Won't he give it to the *Mädchen* right and left!"

"What time is he coming?" proceeded one of the oboists.

"Don't know: know nothing about it; perhaps he'll appear in *Tannhäuser* to-night. Look out, Friedhelm."

"Here comes little Luischen," said Karl, with a winning smile, a straightening of his collar, and a general arming-for-conquest expression, as some of the "ladies of

the chorus and ballet" appeared from a side door. "Isn't she pretty?" he went on, in an audible aside to me. "I've a crow to pluck with her too. *Tag, Fräulein!*" he added, advancing to the young lady who had so struck him.

He was "struck" on an average once a week, every time with the most beautiful and charming of her sex. The others, with one or two exceptions, also turned. I said good-morning to Linders, who wished, with a noble generosity, to make me a partaker in his cheerful conversation with Fräulein Luise of the first soprans, slipped from his grasp and took my way homewards. Fräulein Luischen was no doubt very pretty, and in her way a companionable person. Unfortunately I never could appreciate that way. With every wish to accommodate myself to the only society with which fortune supplied me, it was but ill that I succeeded.

I, Friedhelm Helfen, was at that time a lonely, soured misanthrope of two and twenty. Let the announcement sound as absurd as it may, it is simply and absolutely true. I was literally alone in the world. My last relative had died and left me entirely without any one who could have even a theoretical reason for taking any interest in me. Gradually, during the last few months, I had fallen into evil places of thought and imagination. There had been a time before, as there has been a time since—as it is with me now—when I worshipped my art with all my strength as the most beautiful thing on earth; the art of arts—the most beautiful and perfect development of beauty which

mankind has yet succeeded in attaining to, and when the very fact of its being so and of my being gifted with some poor power of expressing and interpreting that beauty was enough for me—gave me a place in the world with which I was satisfied, and made life understandable to me. At that time this belief—my natural and normal state—was clouded over; between me and the goddess of my idolatry had fallen a veil; I wasted my brain tissue in trying to philosophize—cracked my head, and almost my reason, over the endless, unanswerable question, *Cui bono?* that question which may so easily become the destruction of the fool who once allows himself to be drawn into dallying with it. *Cui bono?* is a mental Delilah who will shear the locks of the most arrogant Samson. And into the arms and to the tender mercies of this Delilah I had given myself. I was in a fair way of being lost for ever in her snares, which she sets for the feet of men. To what use all this toil? To what use—*music?* After by dint of hard twisting my thoughts and coping desperately with problems that I did not understand, having managed to extract a conviction that there *was* use in music—a use to beautify, gladden, and elevate—I began to ask myself, further: "What is it to *me* whether mankind is elevated or not? made better or worse? higher or lower?"

Only one who has asked himself that question, as I did, in bitter earnest, and fairly faced the answer, can know the horror, the blackness, the emptiness of the abyss into which it gives one a glimpse. Blackness of darkness—no standpoint, no vantage-ground—it is a horror of horrors;

it haunted me then day and night, and constituted itself not only my companion, but my tyrant.

I was in bad health too. At night, when the joyless day was over, the work done, the play played out, the smell of the footlights and gas and the dust of the stage dispersed, a deadly weariness used to overcome me: an utter, tired, miserable apathy; and alone, surrounded by loneliness, I let my morbid thoughts carry me whither they would. It had gone so far that I had even begun to say to myself lately:

"Friedhelm Helfen, you are not wanted. On the other side this life is a nothingness so large that you will be as nothing in it. Launch yourself into it. The story that suicide is wrong and immoral is, like other things, to be taken with reservation. There is no absolute right and wrong. Suicide is sometimes the highest form of right and reason."

This mood was strong upon me on that particular day, and as I paced along the Schadowstrasse towards the Wehrhahn, where my lodging was, the very stones seemed to cry out, "The world is weary, and you are not wanted in it."

A heavy, cold, beating rain began to fall. I entered the room which served me as living and sleeping room. From habit I ate and drank at the same restauration as that frequented by my *confrères* of the orchestra. I leaned my elbows upon the table, and listened drearily to the beat of the rain upon the pane. Scattered sheets of music containing, some great, others little thoughts, lay around me. Lately it seemed as if the flavor was gone from them. The

other night Beethoven himself had failed to move me; and I accepted it as a sign that all was over with me. In an hour it would be time to go out and seek dinner, if I made up my mind to have any dinner. Then there would be the afternoon—the dreary, wet afternoon, the tramp through the soaking streets, with the lamplight shining into the pools of water, to the theatre; the lights, the people, the weary round of painted ballet-girls, and accustomed voices and faces of audience and performers. The same number of bars to play, the same to leave unplayed; the whole dreary story, gone through so often before, to be gone through so often again.

The restauration did not see me that day; I remained in the house. There was to be a great concert in the course of a week or two; the "Tower of Babel" was to be given at it. I had the music. I practised my part, and I remember being a little touched with the exquisite loveliness of one of the choruses, that sung by the "Children of Japhet" as they wander sadly away with their punishment upon them into the *Waldeinsamkeit* (that lovely and untranslatable word), one of the purest and most pathetic melodies ever composed.

It was dark that afternoon. I had not stirred from my hole since coming in from the Probe—had neither eaten nor drunk, and was in full possession of the uninterrupted solitude coveted by busy men. Once I thought that it would have been pleasant if some one had known and cared for me well enough to run up the stairs, put his head into the room, and talk to me about his affairs.

To the sound of gustily blowing wind and rain beating on the pane, the afternoon hours dragged slowly by, and the world went on outside and around me until about five o'clock. Then there came a knock at my door, an occurrence so unprecedented that I sat and stared at the said door instead of speaking, as if Edgar Poe's raven had put in a sudden appearance and begun to croak its "nevermore" at *me*.

The door was opened. A dreadful, dirty-looking young woman, a servant of the house, stood in the doorway.

"What do you want?" I inquired.

A gentleman wished to speak to me.

"Bring him in then," said I, somewhat testily.

She turned and requested some one to come forward. There entered a tall and stately man, with one of those rare faces, beautiful in feature, bright in expression, which one meets sometimes, and having once seen, never forgets. He carried what I took at first for a bundle done up in a dark green plaid, but as I stood up and looked at him I perceived that the plaid was wrapped round a child. Lost in astonishment, I gazed at him in silence.

"I beg you will excuse my intruding upon you thus," said he, bowing, and I involuntarily returned his bow, wondering more and more what he could be. His accent was none of the Elberthal one; it was fine, refined, polished.

"How can I serve you?" I asked, impressed by his voice, manner, and appearance; agreeably impressed. A little masterful he looked—a little imperious, but not unapproachable, with nothing ungenial in his pride.

"You could serve me very much by giving me one or two pieces of information. In the first place, let me introduce myself; you, I think, are Herr Helfen?" I bowed. "My name is Eugen Courvoisier. I am the new member of your *städtisches Orchester*."

"*Oh, was!*" said I, within myself. "*That* our new first violin!"

"And this is my son," he added, looking down at the plaid bundle, which he held very carefully and tenderly. "If you will tell me at what time the opera begins, what it is to-night, and finally, if there is a room to be had, perhaps in this house, even for one night. I must find a nest for this *Vögelein* as soon as I possibly can."

"I believe the opera begins at seven," said I, still gazing at him in astonishment, with open mouth and incredulous eyes. Our orchestra contained amongst its sufficiently varied specimens of nationality and appearance, nothing in the very least like this man, beside whom I felt myself blundering, clumsy and unpolished. It was *not* mere natural grace of manner. He had that, but it had been cultivated somewhere, and cultivated highly.

"Yes?" he said.

"At seven—yes. It is *Tannhäuser* to-night. And the rooms—I believe they have rooms in the house."

"Ah, then I will inquire about it," said he, with an exceedingly open and delightful smile. "I thank you for telling me. Adieu, *mein Herr*."

"Is he asleep?" I asked abruptly, and pointing to the bundle.

"Yes; *armes Kerlchen!* just now he is," said the young man.

He was quite young, I saw. In that half light I supposed him even younger than he really was. He looked down at the bundle again and smiled.

"I should like to see him," said I politely and gracefully, seized by an impulse of which I felt ashamed, but which I yet could not resist.

With that I stepped forward and came to examine the bundle. He moved the plaid a little aside and showed me a child—a very young, small, helpless child, with closed eyes, immensely long, black, curving lashes, and fine, delicate black brows. The small face was flushed, but even in sleep *this* child looked melancholy. Yet he was a lovely child—most beautiful and most pathetic to see.

I looked at the small face in silence, and a great desire came upon me to look at it oftener—to see it again, then up at that of the father. How unlike the two faces! Now that I fairly looked at the man, I found he was different from what I had thought: older, sparer, with more sharply-cut features. I could not tell what the child's eyes might be—those of the father were piercing as an eagle's; clear, open, strange. There was sorrow in the face, I saw, as I looked so earnestly into it; and it was worn as if with a keen inner life. This glance was one of those which penetrate deep, not the glance of a moment, but a revelation for life.

"He is very beautiful," said I.



"*Nicht wahr?*" said the other softly.

"Look here," I added, going to a sofa which was strewn with papers, books, and other paraphernalia; "couldn't we put him here, and then go and see about the rooms? Such a young, tender child must not be carried about the passages and the house is full of draughts."

I do not know what had so suddenly supplied me with this wisdom as to what was good for a "young, tender child," nor can I account for the sudden deep interest which possessed me. I dashed the things off the sofa, beat the dust from it, desired him to wait one moment while I rushed to my bed to ravish it of its pillow. Then with the sight of the bed (I was buying my experience) I knew that that, and not the sofa, was the place for the child, and said so.

"Put him here, do put him here!" I besought earnestly. "He will sleep for a time here, won't he?"

"You are very good," said my visitor, hesitating a moment.

"Put him there!" said I, flushed with excitement, and with the hitherto unknown joy of being able to offer hospitality.

Courvoisier looked meditatively at me for a short time, then laid the child upon the bed, and arranged the plaid around it as skilfully and as quickly as a woman would have done it.

"How clever he must be," I thought, looking at him with awe, and with little less awe contemplating the motionless child.

"Wouldn't you like something to put over him?" I

asked, looking excitedly about. "I have an overcoat. I'll lend it you." And I was rushing off to fetch it, but he laughingly laid his hand upon my arm.

"Let him alone," said he; "he's all right."

"He won't fall off, will he?" I asked anxiously.

"No; don't be alarmed. Now, if you will be so good, we will see about the rooms."

"Dare you leave him?" I asked, still with anxiety, and looking back as we went towards the door.

"I dare because I must," replied he.

He closed the door, and we went downstairs to seek the persons in authority. Courvoisier related his business and condition, and asked to see rooms. The woman hesitated when she heard there was a child.

"The child will never trouble you, madam," said he quietly, but rather as if the patience of his look were forced.

"No, never!" I added fervently. "I will answer for that, Frau Schmidt."

A quick glance, half gratitude, half amusement, shot from his eyes as the woman went on to say that she only took gentlemen lodgers, and could not do with ladies, children, and nursemaids. They wanted so much attending to, and she did not profess to open her house to them.

"You will not be troubled with either lady or nursemaid," said he. "I take charge of the child myself. You will not know that he is in the house."

"But your wife——" she began.

"There will be no one but myself and my little boy,"

he replied, ever politely, but ever, as it seemed to me, with repressed pain or irritation.

"So!" said the woman, treating him to a long, curious, unsparing look of wonder and inquiry which made me feel hot all over. He returned the glance quietly, and unsmilingly. After a pause, she said:

"Well, I suppose I must see about it, but it will be the first child I ever took into the house in that way, and only as a favor to Herr Helfen."

I was greatly astonished, not having known before that I stood in such high esteem. Courvoisier threw me a smiling glance as we followed the woman up the stairs, up to the top of the house, where I lived. Throwing open a door, she said there were two rooms which must go together.

Courvoisier shook his head.

"I do not want two rooms," said he, "or rather, I don't think I can afford them. What do you charge?"

She told him.

"If it were so much," said he, naming a smaller sum, "I could do it."

"*Nee!*" said the woman curtly; "for that I can't do it. *Um Gotteswillen!* One must live."

She paused, reflecting, and I watched anxiously. She was going to refuse. My heart sank. Rapidly reviewing my own circumstances and finances, and making a hasty calculation in my mind, I said:

"Why can't we arrange it? Here is a big room and a little room. Make the little room into a bedroom, and

use the big room for a sitting-room. I will join at it, and so it will come within the price you wish to pay."

The woman's face cleared a little. She had listened with a clouded expression and her head on one side. Now she straightened herself, drew herself up, smoothed down her apron, and said:

"Yes, that lets itself be heard. If Herr Helfen agreed to that, she would like it."

"Oh, but I can't think of putting you to the extra expense," said Courvoisier.

"I should like it," said I. "I have often wished I had a little more room, but, like you, I couldn't afford the whole expense. We can have a piano, and the child can play there. Don't you see?" I added, with great eagerness and touching his arm. "It is a large airy room: he can run about there, and make as much noise as he likes."

He still seemed to hesitate.

"I can afford it," said I. "I've no one but myself, unluckily. If you don't object to my company, let us try it. We shall be neighbors in the orchestra."

"So!"

"Why not at home too? I think it is an excellent plan. Let us decide it so."

I was very urgent about it. An hour ago I could not have conceived anything which could make me so urgent and set my heart beating so.

"If I did not think it would inconvenience you," he began.

"Then it is settled?" said I. "Now let us go and see what kind of furniture there is in that big room."

Without allowing him to utter any further objection, I dragged him to the large room, and we surveyed it. The woman, who for some unaccountable reason appeared to have recovered her good temper in a marvellous manner, said quite cheerfully that she would send the maid to make the smaller room ready as a bedroom for two. "One of us won't take much room," said Courvoisier with a laugh, to which she assented with a smile, and then left us. The big room was long, low, and rather dark. Beams were across the ceiling, and two not very large windows looked upon the street below, across to two similar windows of another lodging-house; a little to the left of which was the Tonhalle. The floor was carpetless, but clean; there was a big square table, and some chairs.

"There," said I, drawing Courvoisier to the window, and pointing across; "there is one scene of your future exertions, the *Städtische Tonhalle*."

"So!" said he, turning away again from the window: it was as dark as ever outside, and looking round the room again. "This is a dull-looking place," he added, gazing around it.

"We'll soon make it different," said I, rubbing my hands and gazing round the room with avidity. "I have long wished to be able to inhabit this room. We must make it more cheerful, though, before the child comes to it. We'll have the stove lighted, and we'll knock up some shelves, and we'll have a piano in, and the sofa from my

room, *nicht wahr?* Oh, we'll make a place of it, I can tell you."

He looked at me as if struck with my enthusiasm, and I bustled about. We set to work to make the room habitable. He was out for a short time at the station, and returned with the luggage which he had left there. While he was away I stole into my room and took a good look at my new treasure: he still slept peacefully and calmly on. We were deep in *impromptu* carpentering and contrivances for use and comfort, when it occurred to me to look at my watch.

"Five minutes to seven!" I almost yelled, dashing wildly into my room to wash my hands and get my violin. Courvoisier followed me. The child was awake. I felt a horrible sense of guilt as I saw it looking at me with great, soft, solemn, brown eyes, not in the least those of its father, but it did not move. I said apologetically that I feared I had wakened it.

"Oh no! He's been awake for some time," said Courvoisier. The child saw him, and stretched out its arms towards him.

"*Na! junger Taugenichts!*" he said, taking it up and kissing it. "Thou must stay here till I come back. Wilt be happy till I come?"

The answer made by the mournful-looking child was a singular one. It put both tiny arms around the big man's neck, laid its face for a moment against his, and loosed him again. Neither word nor sound did it emit during the process. A feeling altogether new and astonishing over-

came me. I turned hastily away, and as I picked up my violin-case, was amazed to find my eyes dim. My visitors were something unprecedented to me.

"You are not compelled to go to the theatre to-night, you know, unless you like," I suggested, as we went down-stairs.

"Thanks, it is as well to begin at once."

On the lowest landing we met Frau Schmidt.

"Where are you going, *meine Herren?*" she demanded.

"To work, madame," he replied, lifting his cap with a courtesy which seemed to disarm her.

"But the child?" she demanded.

"Do not trouble yourself about him."

"Is he asleep?"

"Not just now. He is all right, though."

She gave us a look which meant volumes. I pulled Courvoisier out.

"Come along, do!" cried I. "She will keep you there for half an hour, and it is time now."

We rushed along the streets too rapidly to have time or breath to speak, and it was five minutes after the time when we scrambled into the orchestra, and found that the overture was already begun.

Though there is certainly not much time for observing one's fellows when one is helping in the overture to *Tannhäuser*, yet I saw the many curious and astonished glances which were cast towards our new member, glances of which he took no notice, simply because he apparently did not see them. He had the finest absence of self-consciousness that I ever saw.

The first act of the opera was over, and it fell to my share to make Courvoisier known to his fellow-musicians. I introduced him to the Director, who was not von Francius, nor any friend of his. Then we retired to one of the small rooms on one side of the orchestra.

"*Hundewetter!*" said one of the men, shivering. "Have you travelled far to-day?" he inquired of Courvoisier, by way of opening the conversation.

"From Köln only."

"Live there?"

"No."

The man continued his catechism, but in another direction.

"Are you a friend of Helfen's?"

"I rather think Helfen has been a friend to me," said Courvoisier, smiling.

"Have you found lodgings already?"

"Yes."

"So!" said his interlocutor, rather puzzled with the new arrival. I remember the scene well. Half-a-dozen of the men were standing in one corner of the room, smoking, drinking beer, and laughing over some not very brilliant joke; we three were a little apart. Courvoisier stately and imposing-looking, and with that fine manner of his, politely answering his interrogator, a small, sharp-featured man, who looked up to him, and rattled complacently away, while I sat upon the table amongst the fiddle-cases and beer-glasses, my foot on a chair, my chin in my hand, feeling my cheeks glow, and a strange sense of

dizziness and weakness all over me, a lightness in my head which I could not understand. It had quite escaped me that I had neither eaten nor drunk since my breakfast at eight o'clock, on a cup of coffee and a dry *Brödchen*, and it was now twelve hours later.

The pause was not a long one, and we returned to our places. But *Tannhäuser* is not a short opera. As time went on my sensations of illness and faintness increased. During the second pause I remained in my place. Courvoisier presently came and sat beside me.

"I'm afraid you feel ill," said he.

I denied it. But though I struggled on to the end, yet at last a deadly faintness overcame me. As the curtain went down amidst applause, everything reeled around me. I heard the bustle of the others—of the audience going away. I myself could not move.

"*Was ist denn mit ihm?*" I heard Courvoisier say as he stooped over me.

"Is that Friedhelm Helfen?" asked Karl Linders, surveying me. "*Potzblitz!* he looks like a corpse! he's been at his old tricks again, starving himself. I expect he has touched nothing the whole day."

"Let's get him out and give him some brandy," said Courvoisier. "Lend him an arm, and I'll give him one on this side."

Together they hauled me down to the retiring-room.

"*Ei!* he wants a *Schnapps*, or something of the kind," said Karl, who seemed to think the whole affair an excellent joke. "Look here, *alter Narr!*" he added;

"you've been going without anything to eat, *nicht wahr?*"

"I believe I have," I assented feebly. "But I'm all right; I'll go home."

Rejecting Karl's pressing entreaties to join him at supper at his favorite *Wirthschaft*, we went home, purchasing our supper on the way. Courvoisier's first step was towards the place where he had left the child. He was gone.

"*Verschwunden!*" cried he, striding off to the sleeping-room, whither I followed him. The little lad had been undressed and put to bed in a small crib, and was sleeping serenely.

"That's Frau Schmidt, who can't do with children and nursemaids," said I, laughing.

"It's very kind of her," said he, as he touched the child's cheek slightly with his little finger, and then, without another word, returned to the other room, and we sat down to our long-delayed supper.

"What on earth made you spend more than twelve hours without food?" he asked me, laying down his knife and fork, and looking at me.

"I'll tell you some time perhaps, not now," said I, for there had begun to dawn upon my mind, like a sun-ray, the idea that life held an interest for me—two interests—a friend and a child. To a miserable, lonely wretch like me, the idea was divine.

CHAPTER II

"Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower,
We will grieve not—rather find
Strength in what remains behind:
In the primal sympathy
Which, having been, must ever be.
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering!
In the faith that looks through death—
In years, that bring the philosophic mind."

WORDSWORTH.

FROM that October afternoon I was a man saved from myself. Courvoisier had said, in answer to my earnest entreaties about joining house-keeping: "We will try—you may not like it, and if so, remember you are at liberty to withdraw when you will." The answer contented me, because I knew that I should not try to withdraw.

Our friendship progressed by such quiet, imperceptible degrees, each one knotting the past more closely and inextricably with the present, that I could by no means relate them if I wished it. But I do not wish it. I only know, and am content with it, that it has fallen to my lot to be blessed with that most precious of *all* earthly possessions, the "friend" that "sticketh closer than a brother." Our union has grown and remained not merely "*fest und treu*," but immovable, unshakable.

There was first the child. He was two years old: a strange, weird, silent child, very beautiful—as the son of his father could scarcely fail to be—but with a different

kind of beauty. How still he was, and how patient! Not a fretful child, not given to crying or complaint; fond of resting in one place, with solemn, thoughtful eyes, fixed, when his father was there, upon him; when his father was not there, upon the strip of sky which was to be seen through the window above the house-tops.

The child's name was Sigmund; he displayed a friendly disposition towards me, indeed he was passively friendly and—if one may say such a thing of a baby—courteous to all he came in contact with. He had inherited his father's polished manner; one saw that when he grew up he would be a "gentleman," in the finest outer sense of the word. His inner life he kept concealed from us. I believe he had some method of communicating his ideas to Eugen, even if he never spoke. Eugen could never conceal his own mood from the child; it knew—let him feign otherwise never so cunningly—exactly what he felt, glad or sad, or between the two, and no acting could deceive him. It was a strange, intensely interesting study to me, one to which I daily returned with fresh avidity. He would let me take him in my arms and talk to him; would sometimes, after looking at me long and earnestly, break into a smile—a strange, grave, sweet smile. Then I could do no otherwise than set him hastily down, and look away, for so unearthly a smile I had never seen. He was, though fragile, not an unhealthy child; though so delicately formed, and intensely sensitive to nervous shocks, had nothing of the coward in him, as was proved to us in a thousand ways: shivered through and through his little

frame at the sight of a certain picture to which he had taken a great antipathy, a picture which hung in the public gallery at the Tonhalle: he hated it, because of a certain evil-looking man portrayed in it; but when his father, taking his hand, said to him, "Go, Sigmund, and look at that man; I wish thee to look at him," went, without turn or waver, and gazed long and earnestly at the low-type, bestial visage portrayed to him. Eugen had trodden noiselessly behind him; I watched, and he watched, how his two little fists clenched themselves at his sides, while his gaze never wavered, never wandered, till at last Eugen, with a strange expression, caught him in his arms and half killed him with kisses.

"*Mein Liebling!*" he murmured, as if utterly satisfied with him.

Courvoisier himself? There were a great many strong and positive qualities about this man, which in themselves would have set him somewhat apart from other men. Thus he had crotchety ideas about truth and honor, such as one might expect from so knightly-looking a personage. It was Karl Linders who, at a later period of our acquaintance, amused himself by chalking up, "*Prinz Eugen, der edle Ritter,*" beneath his name. His musical talent—or rather genius, it was more than talent—was at that time not one-fifth part known to me, yet even what I saw excited my wonder. But these, and a long list of other active characteristics, all faded into insignificance before the towering passion of his existence—his love for his child. It was strange, it was touching, to see the bond

between father and son. The child's thoughts and words, as told in his eyes and from his lips, formed the man's philosophy. I believe Eugen confided everything to his boy. His first thought in the morning, his last at night, was for *den Kleinen*. His leisure was—I cannot say "given up" to the boy—but it was always passed with him.

Courvoisier soon gained a reputation among our comrades for being a sham and a delusion. They said that to look at him one would suppose that no more genial, jovial fellow could exist—there was kindliness in his glance, *bon camaraderie* in his voice, a genial, open, human, sympathetic kind of influence in his nature, and in all he did. "And yet," said Karl Linders to me, with gesticulation, "one never can get him to go anywhere. One may invite him, one may try to be friends with him, but, no! off he goes—*home!* What does the fellow want at home? He behaves like a young miss of fifteen, whose governess won't let her mix with vulgar companions."

I laughed, despite myself, at this tirade of Karl. So that was how Eugen's behavior struck outsiders!

"And you are every bit as bad as he is, and as soft—he has made you so," went on Linders vehemently. "It isn't right. You two ought to be the leaders outside as well as in, but you walk yourselves away, and stay at *home!* At home, indeed! Let green goslings and grandfathers stay at home."

Indeed, Herr Linders was not a person who troubled home much; spending his time from morning to night

between theatre and concert-room, restauration and *Verein*.

"What do you *do* at home?" he asked irately.

"That's our concern, *mein Lieber*," said I composedly, thinking of young Sigmund, whose existence was unknown except to our two selves, and laughing.

"Are you composing a symphonie? or an opera buffa? You might tell a fellow."

I laughed again, and said we led a peaceable life, as honest citizens should; and added, laying my hand upon his shoulder, for I had more of a leaning towards Karl, scamp though he was, than to any of the others, "You might do worse than follow our example, old fellow."

"Bah!" said he, with unutterable contempt. "I'm a man; not a milksop. Besides, how do I know what your example is? You *say* you behave yourselves; but how am I to know it? I'll drop upon you unawares, and catch you sometime. See if I don't."

The next evening, by a rare chance with us, was a free one—there was no opera and no concert; we had had Probe that morning, and were at liberty to follow the devices and desires of our own hearts that evening.

Those devices and desires led us straight home, followed by a sneering laugh from Linders, which vastly amused me. The year was drawing to a close. Christmas was nigh: the weather was cold and unfriendly. Our stove was lighted; our lamp burnt pleasantly on the table; our big room looked homely and charming by these evening lights.

Master Sigmund was wide awake in honor of the occasion, and sat upon my knee whilst his father played the fiddle. I have not spoken of his playing before—it was, in its way, unique. It was not a violin that he played—it was a spirit that he invoked—and a strange answer it sometimes gave forth to his summons. To-night he had taken it up suddenly, and sat playing, without book, a strange melody which wrung my heart—full of minor cadences, with an infinite wail and weariness in it. I closed my eyes and listened. It was sad, but it was absorbing. When I opened my eyes again and looked down, I found that tears were running from Sigmund's eyes. He was sobbing quietly—his head against my breast.

"I say, Eugen! look here!"

"Is he crying? Poor little chap! He'll have a good deal to go through before he's *fertig mit Allem*," said Eugen, laying down his violin.

"What was that? I never heard it before."

"I have, often," said he, resting his chin upon his hand, "in the sound of streams—in the rush of a crowd—upon a mountain—yes, even alone with the woman I——" he broke off abruptly.

"But never on a violin before?" said significantly.

"No, never."

"Why don't you print some of those impromptus that you are always making?" I asked.

He shrugged his shoulders. Ere I could pursue the question some one knocked at the door, and in answer to our *Herein!* appeared a handsome, laughing face, and a head

of wavy hair, which, with a tall, shapely figure, I recognized as those of Karl Linders.

"I told you fellows I'd hunt you up, and I always keep my word," said he composedly. "You can't very well turn me out for calling upon you."

He advanced. Courvoisier rose, and with a courteous cordiality offered his hand, and drew a chair up. Karl came forward, looking round, smiling and chuckling at the success of his experiment, and as he came opposite to me his eyes fell upon those of the child, who had raised his head and was staring gravely at him.

Never shall I forget the start—the look of amaze, almost of fear, which shot across the face of Linders. Amazement would be a weak word in which to describe it. He stopped, stood stock-still, in the middle of the room; his jaw fell—he gazed from one to the other of us in feeble astonishment, then said in a whisper:

"*Donnerwetter!* A child!"

"Don't use bad language before the little innocent," said I, enjoying his confusion.

"Which of you does it belong to? Is it he or she?" he inquired in an awe-struck and alarmed manner.

"His name is Sigmund Courvoisier," said I, with difficulty preserving my gravity.

"Oh, indeed! I—I wasn't aware—" began Karl, looking at Eugen in such a peculiar manner—half respectful, half timid, half ashamed—that I could no longer contain my feelings, but burst into such a shout of laughter as I had not enjoyed for years. After a moment, Eugen joined

in: we laughed peal after peal of laughter, while poor Karl stood feebly looking from one to the other of the company—speechless—crestfallen.

"I beg your pardon," he said at last, "I won't intrude any longer. Good——"

He was making for the door, but Eugen made a dash after him, turned him round, and pushed him into a chair.

"Sit down, man," said he, stifling his laughter. "Sit down, man; do you think the poor little chap will hurt you?"

Karl cast a distrustful glance sideways at my nursing and spoke not.

"I'm glad to see you," pursued Eugen. "Why didn't you come before?"

At that Karl's lips began to twitch with a humorous smile: presently he too began to laugh, and seemed not to know how or when to stop.

"It beats all I ever saw or heard or dreamt of," said he at last. "*That's* what brought you home in such a hurry every night. Let me congratulate you, Friedel! You make a first-rate nurse; when everything else fails *I* will give you a character as *Kindermädchen;* clean, sober, industrious, and not given to running after young men." With which he roared again, and Sigmund surveyed him with a somewhat severe, though scarcely a disapproving expression. Karl seated himself near him, and, though not yet venturing to address him, cast various glances of blandishment and persuasion upon him.

Half an hour passed thus, and a second knock was followed by the entrance of Frau Schmidt.

"Good-evening, gentlemen," she remarked in a tone which said unutterable things—scorn, contempt, pity—all finely blended into a withering sneer, as she cast her eyes around, and a slight but awful smile played about her lips. "Half-past eight, and that blessed baby not in bed yet. I knew how it would be. And you all smoking, too—*natürlich!* You ought to know better, Herr Courvoisier—*you* ought, at any rate," she added, scorn dropping into heart-piercing reproach. "Give him to me," she added, taking him from me, and apostrophizing him. "You poor, blessed lamb! Well for you that I'm here to look after you, that have had children of my own, and know a *little* about the sort of way that you ought to be brought up in."

Evident signs of uneasiness on Karl's part, as Frau Schmidt, with the same extraordinary contortion of the mouth—half smile, half sneer—brought Sigmund to his father, to say good-night. That process over, he was brought to me, and then, as if it were a matter which "understood itself," to Karl. Eugen and I, like family men as we were, had gone through the ceremony with willing grace. Karl backed his chair a little, looked much alarmed, shot a queer glance at us, at the child, and then appealingly up into the woman's face. We, through our smoke, watched him.

"He looks so very—very——" he began.

"Come, come, *mein Herr*, what does that mean? Kiss

the little angel, and be thankful you may. The innocent! You ought to be delighted," said she, standing with grenadier-like stiffness beside him.

"He won't bite you, Karl," I said, reassuringly. "He's quite harmless."

Thus encouraged, Herr Linders stooped forward, and touched the cheek of the child with his lips; then, as if surprised, stroked it with his finger.

"*Lieber Himmel!* how soft! Like satin, or rose-leaves!" he murmured, as the woman carried the child away, shut the door, and disappeared.

"Does she tackle you in that way every night?" he inquired next.

"Every evening," said Eugen. "And I little dare open my lips before her. You would notice how quiet I kept. It's because I am afraid of her."

Frau Schmidt, who had at first objected so strongly to the advent of the child, was now devoted to it, and would have resented exceedingly the idea of allowing any one but herself to put it to bed, dress or undress it, or look after it in general. This state of things had crept on very gradually; she had never *said* how fond she was of the child, but put her kindness upon the ground that as a Christian woman she could not stand by and see it mishandled by a couple of *men*, and oh! the unutterable contempt upon the word "men." Under this disguise she attempted to cover the fact that she delighted to have it with her, to kiss it, fondle it, admire it, and "do for it." We knew now that no sooner had we left the house than



the child would be brought down, and would never leave the care of Frau Schmidt until our return, or until he was in bed and asleep. She said he was a quiet child, and "did not give so much trouble." Indeed the little fellow won a friend in whoever saw him. He had made another conquest to-night. Karl Linders, after puffing away for some time, inquired, with an affectation of indifference:

"How old is he—*der kleine Bengel?*"

"Two—a little more."

"Handsome little fellow!"

"Glad you think so."

"Sure of it. But I didn't know, Courvoisier—so sure as I live, I knew nothing about it!"

"I dare say not. Did I ever say you did?"

I saw that Karl wished to ask another question; one which had trembled upon my own lips many a time, but which I had never asked—which I knew that I never should ask.

"The mother of that child—is she alive or dead? Why may we never hear one word of her? Why this silence, as of the grave? Was she your wife? Did you love her? Did she love you?"

Questions which could not fail to come to me, and about which my thoughts would hang for hours. I could imagine a woman being very deeply in love with Courvoisier. Whether he would love very deeply himself, whether love would form a mainspring of his life and actions, or whether it took only a secondary place—I speak of the love of woman—I could not guess. I could decide upon

many points of his character. He was a good friend, a high-minded and a pure-minded man; his every-day life, the turn of his thoughts and conversation, showed me that as plainly as any great adventure could have done. That he was an ardent musician, an artist in the truest and deepest sense, of a quixotically generous and unselfish nature—all this I had already proved. That he loved his child with a love not short of passion was patent to me every day. But upon the past, silence so utter as I never before met with. Not a hint; not an allusion; not one syllable.

Little Sigmund was not yet two and a half. The story upon which his father maintained so deep a silence was not, could not be a very old one. His behavior gave me no clue as to whether it had been a joyful or a sorrowful one. Mere silence could tell me nothing. Some men are silent about their griefs; some about their joys. I knew not in which direction his disposition lay.

I saw Karl look at him that evening once or twice, and I trembled lest the blundering, good-natured fellow should make the mistake of asking some question. But he did not; I need not have feared. People were not in the habit of putting obtrusive questions to Eugen Courvoisier. The danger was somehow quietly tided over, the delicate ground avoided.

The conversation wandered quietly off to commonplace topics—the state of the orchestra; tales of its doings; the tempers of our different conductors—Malperg of the opera; Woelfl of the ordinary concerts, which took place two or

three times a week, when we fiddled and the public ate, drank, and listened; lastly, von Francius, *königlicher Musikdirektor*.

Karl Linders gave his opinion freely upon the men in authority. He had nothing to do with them, nothing to hope or fear from them; he filled a quiet place amongst the violoncellists, and had attained his twenty-eighth year without displaying any violent talent or tendency to distinguish himself, otherwise than by getting as much mirth out of life as possible, and living in a perpetual state of "carelesse contente."

He desired to know what Courvoisier thought of von Francius: for curiosity—the fault of those idle persons who afterwards develop into busybodies—was already beginning to leave its traces on Herr Linders. It was less known than guessed that the state of things between Courvoisier and von Francius was less peace than armed neutrality. The intense politeness of von Francius to his first violinist, and the punctilious ceremoniousness of the latter towards his chief, were topics of speculation and amusement to the whole orchestra.

"I think von Francius would be a fiend if he could," said Karl comfortably. "I wouldn't stand it if he spoke to me as he speaks to some people."

"Oh, they like it!" said Courvoisier: and Karl stared.

"Girls don't object to a little bullying: anything rather than be left quite alone," he went on tranquilly.

"Girls!" ejaculated Karl.

"You mean the young ladies in the chorus, don't

you ?" asked Courvoisier, unmovedly. "He *does* school them, I don't deny; but they come back again."

"Oh, I see!" said Karl, accepting the rebuff.

He had *not* referred to the young ladies of the chorus.

"Have you heard von Francius play?" he began next.

"*Natürlich!*"

"What do you think of it?"

"I think it is superb!" said Courvoisier.

Baffled again, Karl was silent.

"The power and the daring of it are grand," went on Eugen heartily. "I could listen to him for hours. To see him seat himself before the piano, as if he were sitting down to read a newspaper, and do what he does, without moving a muscle, is simply superb—there's no other word. Other men may play the piano; he takes the key-board and plays *with* it, and it says what he likes."

I looked at him, and was satisfied. He found the same want in von Francius's "superb" manipulation that I did —the glitter of a diamond, not the glow of a fire.

Karl had not the subtlety to retort, "Ah, but does it say what *we* like?" He subsided again, merely giving a meek assent to the proposition, and saying suggestively:

"He's not liked, though he is such a popular fellow."

"The public is often a great fool."

"Well, but you can't expect it to kiss the hand that slaps it in the face, as von Francius does," said Karl, driven to metaphor, probably for the first time in his life, and seeming astonished at having discovered a hitherto unknown mental property pertaining to himself.

Courvoisier laughed.

"I'm certain of one thing: von Francius will go on slapping the public's face. I won't say how it will end: but it would not surprise me in the least to see the public at his feet, as it is now at those of——"

"Humph!" said Karl reflectively.

He did not stay much longer, but having finished his cigar, rose. He seemd to feel very apologetic, and out of the fulness of his heart his mouth spake:

"I really wouldn't have intruded if I had known——"

"Known what?" inquired Eugen, with well-assumed surprise.

"I thought you were just by yourselves, you know, and——"

"So we are; but we can do with other society. Friedel here gets very tedious sometimes—in fact, *langweilig*. Come again, *nicht wahr?*"

"If I shan't be in your way," said Karl, looking round the room with somewhat wistful eyes.

We assured him to the contrary, and he promised, with unnecessary emphasis, to come again.

"He will return; I know he will!" sang Eugen, after he had gone.

The next time that Herr Linders arrived, which was ere many days had passed, he looked excited and important: and after the first greetings were over, he undid a great number of papers, which wrapped and enfolded a parcel of considerable dimensions, and displayed to our enraptured view a white woolly animal of stupendous dimensions,

fastened upon a green stand, which stand, when pressed, caused the creature to give forth a howl, like unto no lowing of oxen nor bleating of sheep ever heard on earth. This inviting-looking creature he held forth towards Sigmund, who stared at it.

"Perhaps he's got one already," said Karl, seeing that the child did not display any violent enthusiasm about the treasure.

"Oh no!" said Eugen promptly.

"Perhaps he doesn't know what it is," I suggested rather unkindly, scarcely able to keep my countenance at the idea of *that* baby playing with such a toy.

"Perhaps not," said Karl more cheerfully, kneeling down by my side—Sigmund sat on my knee—and squeezing the stand so that the woolly animal howled. "*Sieh!* Sigmund! Look at the pretty lamb!"

"Oh, come, Karl! Are you a lamb? Call it an eagle at once," said I, sceptically.

"It *is* a lamb, isn't it?" said he, turning it over. "They called it a lamb at the shop."

"A very queer lamb: not a German breed, anyhow."

"Now I think of it, my little sister has one, but she calls it a rabbit, I believe."

"Very likely. You might call that anything, and no one could contradict you."

"Well, *der Kleine* doesn't know the difference: it's a *toy*," said Karl desperately.

"Not a toy that seems to take his fancy much," said I, as Sigmund, with evident signs of displeasure, turned

away from the animal on the green stand, and refused to look at it. Karl looked despondent.

"He doesn't like the look of it," said he plaintively. "I thought I was sure to be right in this. My little sister" (Karl's little sister had certainly never been so often quoted by her brother before) "plays for hours with that thing she calls a rabbit."

Eugen had come to the rescue, and grasped the woolly animal which Karl had contemptuously thrown aside. After convincing himself by near examination as to which was intended for head, and which for tail, he presented it to his son, remarking that it was "a pretty toy."

"I'll pray for you after that, Eugen—often, and earnestly," said I.

Sigmund looked appealingly at him, but seeing that his father appeared able to endure the presence of the beast, and seemed to wish him to do the same, from some dark and inscrutable reason not to be grasped by so young a mind—for he was modest as to his own intelligence—he put out his small arm, received the creature into it, and embracing it round the body, held it to his side, and looked at Eugen with a pathetic expression.

"Pretty plaything, *nicht wahr?*" said Eugen encouragingly. Sigmund nodded, silently. The animal emitted a howl; the child winced, but looked resigned. Eugen rose and stood at some little distance, looking on. Sigmund continued to embrace the animal with the same resigned expression, until Karl, stooping, took it away.

"You mustn't *make* him, just because I brought it," said

he. "Better luck next time. I see he's not a common child. I must try to think of something else."

We commanded our countenances with difficulty, but preserved them. Sigmund's feelings had been severely wounded. For many days he eyed Karl with a strange, cold glance, which the latter used every art in his power to change, and at last succeeded. Woolly lambs became a forbidden subject. Nothing annoyed Karl more than for us to suggest, if Sigmund happened to be a little cross or mournful—"Suppose you just go home, Karl, and fetch that 'lamb-rabbit-lion.' I'm sure he would like it." From that time the child had another worshipper, and we a constant visitor in Karl Linders.

We sat together one evening—Eugen and I, after Sigmund had been in bed a long time, after the opera was over—chatting, as we often did, or as often remained silent. He had been reading, and the book from which he read was a volume of English poetry. At last, laying the book aside, he said:

"The first night we met you fainted away from exhaustion and long fasting. You said you would tell me why you had allowed yourself to do so, but you have never kept your word."

"I didn't care to eat. People eat to live—except those who live to eat, and I was not very anxious to live; I didn't care for my life; in fact, I wished I was dead."

"Why? An unlucky love?"

"*I, bewahre!* I never knew what it was to be in love in my life," said I, with perfect truth.

"Is that true, Friedel?" he asked, apparently surprised.

"As true as possible. I think a timely love affair, however unlucky, would have roused me and brought me to my senses again."

"General melancholy?"

"Oh, I was alone in the world. I had been reading, reading, reading: my brain was one dark and misty muddle of Kant, Schopenhauer, von Hartmann, and a few others. I read them one after another, as quickly as possible: the mixture had the same effect upon my mind as the indiscriminate contents of a toffy-shop would have upon Sigmund's stomach—it made it sick. In my crude, ungainly, unfinished fashion I turned over my information, laying down big generalizations upon a foundation of experience of the smallest possible dimensions, and all upon one side."

He nodded. "Ei! I know it."

"And after considering the state of the human race—that is to say the half dozen people I knew, and the miseries of the human lot as set forth in the books I had read, and having proved to myself, all up in that little room, you know"—I pointed to my bedroom—"that there neither was nor could be heaven or hell or any future state, and having decided, also from that room, that there was no place for me in the world, and that I was very likely actually filling the place of some other man, poorer than I was, and able to think life a good thing" (Eugen was smiling to himself in great amusement), "I came to the

conclusion that the best thing I could do was to leave the world."

"Were you going to starve yourself to death? That is rather a tedious process, *nicht wahr?*"

"Oh no! I had not decided upon any means of effacing myself; and it was really your arrival which brought on that fainting fit, for if you hadn't turned up when you did I should probably have thought of my interior some time before seven o'clock. But you came. Eugen, I wonder *what* sent you up to my room just at that very time, on that very day!"

"Von Francius," said Eugen tranquilly. "I had seen him, and he was very busy and referred me to you—that's all."

"Well—let us call it von Francius."

"But what's the end of it? Is that the whole story?"

"I thought I might as well help you a bit," said I rather awkwardly. "You were not like other people, you see—it was the child, I think. I was as much amazed as Karl, if I didn't show it so much, and after that——"

"After that?"

"Well. There was the child, you see, and things seemed quite different somehow. I've been very comfortable" (this was my way of putting it) "ever since, and I am curious to see what the boy will be like in a few years. Shall you make him into a musician too?"

Courvoisier's brow clouded a little.

"I don't know," was all he said. Later I learnt the reason of that "don't know."

"So it was no love affair," said Eugen again. "Then I have been wrong all the time. I quite fancied it was some girl——"

"What *could* make you think so?" I asked, with a whole-hearted laugh. "I tell you I don't know what it is to be in love. The other fellows are always in love. They are in a constant state of *Schwärmerei* about some girl or other. It goes in epidemics. They have not each a separate passion. The whole lot of them will go mad about one young woman. I can't understand it. I wish I could, for they seem to enjoy it so much."

"You heathen!" said he, but not in a very bantering tone.

"Why, Eugen, do you mean to say that *you* are so very susceptible? Oh, I beg your pardon," I added hastily, shocked and confused to find that I had been so nearly overstepping the boundary which I had always marked out for myself. And I stopped abruptly.

"That's like you, Friedhelm!" said he, in a tone which was in some way different from his usual one. "I never knew such a ridiculous, chivalrous, punctilious fellow as you are. Tell me something—did you never speculate about me?"

"Never impertinently, I assure you, Eugen," said I earnestly.

He laughed.

"*You* impertinent! That is amusing, I must say. But surely you have given me a thought now and then, have wondered whether I *had* a history, or sprang out of nothing?"

"Certainly, and wondered what your story was; but I do not need to know it to——"

"I understand. Well, but it is rather difficult to say this to such an unsympathetic person; you won't understand it. I *have* been in love, Friedel."

"So I can suppose."

I waited for the corollary, "and been loved in return," but it did not come. He said, "And received as much regard in return as I deserved—perhaps more."

As I could not cordially assent to this proposition, I remained silent.

After a pause he went on: "I am eight-and-twenty, and have lived my life. The story won't bear raking up now—perhaps never. For a long time I went on my own way, and was satisfied with it—blindly, inanely, densely satisfied with it; then all at once I was brought to reason——" He laughed, not a very pleasant laugh. "Brought to reason," he resumed, "but how? By waking one morning to find myself a spoiled man, and spoiled by myself, too."

A pause, while I turned this information over in my mind, and then said composedly:

"I don't quite believe in your being a spoiled man. Granted that you have made some fiasco—even a very bad one—what is to prevent your making a life again?"

"Ha, ha!" said he ungenially. "Things not dreamt of, Friedel, by your straightforward philosophy. One night I was, take it all in all, straight with the world and my destiny; the next night I was an outcast, and justly so. I don't complain. I have no right to complain."

Again he laughed.

"I once knew some one," said I, "who used to say that many a good man and many a great man was lost to the world simply because nothing interrupted the course of his prosperity."

"Don't suppose that I am an embryo hero of any description," said he bitterly. "I am merely, as I said, a spoiled man, brought to his senses, and with life before him to go through as best he may, and the knowledge that his own fault has brought him to what he is."

"But look here! If it is merely a question of name or money——" I began.

"It is not merely that; but suppose it were, what then?"

"It lies with yourself. You may make a name either as a composer or performer—your head or your fingers will secure you money and fame."

"None the less should I be, as I said, a spoiled man," he said quietly. "I should be ashamed to come forward. It was I myself who sent myself and my prospects *Caput*,* and for that sort obscurity is the best taste and the right sphere."

"But there's the boy," I suggested. "Let him have the advantage."

"Don't, don't!" he said suddenly, and wincing visibly, as if I had touched a raw spot. "No; my one hope for him is that he may never be known as my son."

* *Caput*—a German slang expression, with the general significance of the English "gone to smash," but also a hundred other and wider meanings, impossible to render in brief.

"But—but——"

"Poor little beggar! I wonder what will become of him," he uttered, after a pause, during which I did not speak again.

Eugen puffed fitfully at his cigar, and at last, knocking the ash from it, and avoiding my eyes, he said in a low voice:

"I suppose sometime I must leave the boy."

"*Leave* him!" I echoed intelligently.

"When he grows a little older—before he is old enough to feel it very much, though, I must part from him. It will be better."

Another pause. No sign of emotion, no quiver of the lips, no groan, though the heart might be afaint. I sat speechless.

"I have not come to the conclusion lately. I've always known it," he went on, and spoke slowly. "I have known it—and have thought about it—so as to get accustomed to it—see?"

I nodded.

"At that time—as you seem to have a fancy for the child—will you give an eye to him—sometimes, Friedel—that is, if you care enough for me——"

For a moment I did not speak. Then I said:

"You are quite sure the parting *must* take place?"

He assented.

"When it does, will you give him to me—to my charge altogether?"

"What do you mean?"

"If he must lose one father, let me grow as like another to him as I can."

"Friedhelm——"

"On no other condition," said I. "I will *not* 'have an eye' to him occasionally. I will *not* let him go out alone amongst strangers, and give a look in upon him now and then."

Eugen had covered his face with his hands, but spoke not.

"I will have him with me altogether, or not at all," I finished, with a kind of jerk.

"Impossible!" said he, looking up, with a pale face and eyes full of anguish—the more intense in that he uttered not a word of it. "Impossible! You are no relation—he has not a claim—there is not a reason—not the wildest reason for such a——"

"Yes, there is; there is the reason that I won't have it otherwise," said I doggedly.

"It is fantastic, like your insane self," he said, with a forced smile, which cut me, somehow, more than if he had groaned.

"Fantastic! I don't know what you mean. What good would it be to me to see him with strangers? I should only make myself miserable with wishing to have him. I don't know what you mean by fantastic."

He drew a long breath. "So be it, then," said he, at last. "And he need know nothing about his father. I may even see him from time to time without his knowing—see him growing into a man like you, Friedel; it would

be worth the separation, even if one had not to make a merit of necessity; yes, well worth it."

"Like me? *Nee, mein Lieber;* he shall be something rather better than I am, let us hope," said I; "but there is time enough to talk about it."

"Oh yes! In a year or two from now," said he, almost inaudibly. "The worst of it is that in a case like this, the years go so fast, so cursedly fast."

I could make no answer to this, and he added, "Give me thy hand upon it, Friedel."

I held out my hand. We had risen, and stood looking steadfastly into each other's eyes.

"I wish I were—what I might have been—to pay you for this," he said hesitatingly, wringing my hand, and laying his left for a moment on my shoulder; then, without another word, went into his room, shutting the door after him.

I remained still—sadder, gladder than I had ever been before. Never had I so intensely felt the deep, eternal sorrow of life—that sorrow which can be avoided by none who rightly live; yet never had life towered before me so rich and so well worth living out, so capable of high exaltation, pure purpose, full satisfaction, and sufficient reward. My quarrel with existence was made up.



CHAPTER III

" The merely great are, all in all,
No more than what the merely small
Esteem them. Man's opinion
Neither conferred nor can remove
This man's dominion."

THREE years passed—an even way. In three years there happened little of importance—little, that is, of open importance—to either of us. I read that sentence again, and cannot help smiling: " to either of us." It shows the progress that our friendship had made. Yes, it had grown every day.

I had no past, painful or otherwise, which I could even wish to conceal; I had no thought that I desired hidden from the man who had become my other self. What there was of good in me, what of evil, he saw. It was laid open to him, and he appeared to consider that the good pre-

dominated over the bad; for, from that first day of meeting, our intimacy went on steadily in one direction—increasing, deepening. He was six years older than I was. At the end of this time of which I speak he was one and thirty, I five and twenty; but we met on equal ground—not that I had anything approaching his capacities in any way. I do not think that had anything to do with it. Our happiness did not depend on mental supremacy. I loved him—because I could not help it; he me, because—upon my word, I can think of no good reason—probably because he did.

And yet we were as unlike as possible. He had habits of reckless extravagance—or what seemed to me reckless extravagance—and a lordly manner (when he forgot himself) of speaking of things, which absolutely appalled my economical burgher-soul. I had certain habits, too—the outcomes of my training, and my sparing, middle-class way of living—which I saw puzzled him very much. To cite only one insignificant incident. We were both great readers, and, despite our sometimes arduous work, contrived to get through a good amount of books in the year. One evening he came home with a brand-new novel, in three volumes, in his hands.

"Here, Friedel; here is some mental dissipation for to-night. Drop that Schopenhauer, and study Heyse. Here is the *Kinder der Welt*—it will suit our case exactly, for it is what we are ourselves."

"How clean it looks!" I observed innocently.

"So it ought, seeing that I have just paid for it."

"Paid for it!" I almost shouted. "Paid for it! You don't mean that you have bought the book?"

"Calm thy troubled spirit! You don't surely mean that you thought me capable of *stealing* the book?"

"You are hopeless. You have paid at *least* eighteen marks for it."

"That's the figure to a pfennig."

"Well," said I, with conscious superiority, "you might have had the whole three volumes from the library for five or six groschen."

"I know. But their copy looked so disgustingly greasy I couldn't have touched it; so I ordered a new one."

"Very well. Your accounts will look well when you come to balance and take stock," I retorted.

"What a fuss about a miserable eighteen marks!" said he, stretching himself out, and opening a volume. "Come, Sig, learn how the children of the world are wiser in their generation than the children of light, and leave that low person to prematurely age himself by beginning to balance his accounts before they are ripe for it."

"I don't know whether you are aware that you are talking the wildest and most utter rubbish that was ever conceived," said I, nettled. "There is simply no sense in it. Given an income of— —"

"*Aber, ich bitte Dich!*" he implored, though laughing; and I was silent.

But his three volumes of the *Kinder der Welt* furnished me with many an opportunity to "point a moral, or adorn a tale," and I believe really warned him off one or two

other similar extravagances. The idea of men in our position recklessly ordering three-volume novels because the circulating library copy happened to be greasy, was one I could not get over for a long time.

We still inhabited the same rooms at No. 45, in the Wehrhahn. We had outstayed many other tenants; men had come and gone, both from our house and from those rooms over the way whose windows faced ours. We passed our time in much the same way—hard work at our profession, and, with Eugen at least, hard work out of it; the education of his boy, whom he made his constant companion in every leisure moment, and taught, with a wisdom that I could hardly believe—it seemed so like inspiration—composition, translation, or writing of his own—incessant employment of some kind. He never seemed able to pass an idle moment; and yet there were times when, it seemed to me, his work did not satisfy him, but rather seemed to disgust him.

Once when I asked him if it were so, he laid down his pen and said, "Yes."

"Then why do you do it?"

"Because—for no reason that I know; but because I am an unreasonable fool."

"An unreasonable fool to work hard?"

"No; but to go on as if hard work *now* can ever undo what years of idleness have done."

"Do you believe in work?" I asked.

"I believe it is the very highest and holiest thing there is, and the grandest purifier and cleanser in the world.

But it is not a panacea against every ill. I believe that idleness is sometimes as strong as work, and stronger. You may do that in a few years of idleness which a lifetime of afterwork won't cover, mend, or improve. You may make holes in your coat from sheer laziness, and then find that no amount of stitching will patch them up again."

I seldom answered these mystic monologues. Love gives a wonderful sharpness even to dull wits; it had sharpened mine so that I often felt he indulged in those speeches out of sheer desire to work off some grief or bitterness from his heart, but that a question might, however innocent, overshoot the mark, and touch a sore spot—the thing I most dreaded. And I did not feel it essential to my regard for him to know every item of his past.

In such cases, however, when there *is* something behind —when one knows it, only does not know what it is (and Eugen had never tried to conceal from me that something had happened to him which he did not care to tell)—then, even though one accept the fact, as I accepted it, without dispute or resentment, one yet involuntarily builds theories, has ideas, or rather the ideas shape themselves about the object of interest, and take their coloring from him, one cannot refrain from conjectures, surmises. Mine were necessarily of the most vague and shadowy description; more negative than active, less theories as to what he had been or done than inferences from what he let fall in talk or conduct as to what he had *not* been or done.

In our three years' acquaintance, it is true, there had not

been much opportunity for any striking display on his part of good or bad qualities; but certainly ample opportunity of testing whether he were, taken all in all, superior, even with, or inferior to the average man of our average acquaintance. And, briefly speaking, to me he had become a standing model of a superior man.

I had by this time learnt to know that when there were many ways of looking at a question, that one, if there were such an one, which was less earthily practical, more ideal and less common than the others, would most inevitably be the view taken by Eugen Courvoisier, and advocated by him with warmth, energy, and eloquence to the very last. The point from which he surveyed the things and the doings of life was, taken all in all, a higher one than that of other men, and was illumined with something of the purple splendor of that "light that never was on sea or land." A less practical conduct, a more ideal view of right and wrong—sometimes a little fantastic even—always imbued with something of the knightliness which sat upon him as a natural attribute. *Ritterlich*, Karl Linders called him, half in jest, half in earnest; and *ritterlich* he was.

In his outward demeanor to the world with which he came in contact, he was courteous to men; to a friend or intimate, as myself, an ever-new delight and joy; to all people, truthful to fantasy; and to women, on the rare occasions on which I ever saw him in their company, he was polite and deferential—but rather overwhelmingly so; it was a politeness which raised a barrier, and there was a

glacial surface to the manner. I remarked this, and speculated about it. He seemed to have one manner to every woman with whom he had anything to do, the maidservant who, at her leisure or pleasure, was supposed to answer our behests (though he would often do a thing himself, alleging that he preferred doing so to "seeing that poor creature's apron"), old Frau Henschel who sold the programmes at the *Casse* at the concerts, to the young ladies who presided behind a counter, to every woman to whom he spoke a chance word, up to Frau Sybel, the wife of the great painter, who came to negotiate about lessons for the lovely Fräulein, her daughter, who wished to play a different instrument from that affected by every one else. The same inimitable courtesy, the same unruffled, unrufflable quiet indifference, and the same utter unconsciousness that he, or his appearance, or behavior, or anything about him, could possibly interest them. And yet he was a man eminently calculated to attract women, only he never to this day has been got to believe so, and will often deprecate his poor power of entertaining ladies.

I often watched this little by-play of behavior from and to the fairer sex with silent amusement, more particularly when Eugen and I made shopping expeditions for Sigmund's benefit. We once went to buy stockings—winter stockings for him; it was a large miscellaneous and small-ware shop, full of young women behind the counters and ladies of all ages before them.

We found ourselves in the awful position of being the only male creatures in the place. Happy in my insignifi-

cance and plainness, I survived the glances that were thrown upon us; I did not wonder that they fell upon my companions. Eugen consulted a little piece of paper on which Frau Schmidt had written down what we were to ask for, and, marching straight up to a disengaged shopwoman, requested to be shown colored woollen stockings.

"For yourself, *mein Herr?*" she inquired, with a fascinating smile.

"No, thank you; for my little boy," says Eugen politely, glancing deferentially round at the piles of wool and packets of hosen around.

"Ah, so! For the young gentleman? *Bitte, meine Herren*, be seated." And she gracefully pushes chairs for us; on one of which I, unable to resist so much affability, sit down.

Eugen remains standing; and Sigmund, desirous of having a voice in the matter, mounts upon his stool, kneels upon it, and leans his elbows on the counter.

The affable young woman returns, and with a glance at Eugen that speaks of worlds beyond colored stockings, proceeds to untie a packet and display her wares. He turns them over. Clearly he does not like them, and does not understand them. They are striped; some are striped latitudinally, others longitudinally. Eugen turns them over, and the young woman murmurs that they are of the *best* quality.

"Are they?" says he, and his eyes roam round the shop. "Well, Sigmund, wilt thou have legs like a stork,

as these long stripes will inevitably make them, or wilt thou have legs like a zebra's back ?"

"I should like legs like a little boy, please," is Sigmund's modest expression of a reasonable desire.

Eugen surveys them.

"*Von der besten Qualität*," repeats the young woman impressively.

"Have you no *blue* ones ?" demands Eugen. "All blue, you know. He wears blue clothes."

"Assuredly, *mein Herr*, but of a much dearer description; real English, magnificent."

She retires to find them, and a young lady who has been standing near us turns and observes:

"Excuse me—you want stockings for your little boy ?"

We both assent. It is a joint affair, of equal importance to both of us.

"I wouldn't have those," says she, and I remark her face.

I have seen her often before—moreover, I have seen her look very earnestly at Eugen. I learnt later that her name was Anna Sartorius. Ere she can finish, the shopwoman, with wreathed smiles still lingering about her face, returns and produces stockings—fine, blue ribbed stockings, such as the children of rich English parents wear. Their fineness, and the smooth quality of the wool, and the good shape appear to soothe Eugen's feelings. He pushes away his heap of striped ones, which look still coarser and commoner now, observing hopefully and cheerily:

"*Ja wol!* That is more what I mean." (The poor

dear fellow had meant nothing, but he knew what he wanted when he saw it.) "These look like thy legs, Sigmund, *nicht wahr?* I'll take——"

I dig him violently in the ribs.

"Hold on, Eugen! How much do they cost the pair, Fräulein?"

"Two thaler twenty-five; the very *best* quality," she says, with a ravishing smile.

"There! eight shillings a pair!" say I. "It is ridiculous."

"Eight shillings!" he repeats ruefully. "That is too much."

"They are *real* English, *mein Herr*," she says feelingly.

"But, *um Gotteswillen!* don't we make any like them in Germany?"

"Oh, sir!" she says reproachfully.

"Those others are such brutes," he remarks, evidently wavering.

I am in despair. The young woman is annoyed to find that he does not even see the amiable looks she has bestowed upon him, so she sweeps back the heap of striped stockings and announces that they are only three marks the pair—naturally inferior, but you cannot have the best article for nothing.

Fräulein Sartorius, about to go, says to Eugen:

"*Mein Herr*, ask for such and such an article. I know they keep them, and you will find it what you want."

Eugen, much touched, and much surprised (as he always is and has been) that any one should take an interest in

him, makes a bow, and a speech, and rushes off to open the door for Fräulein Sartorius, thanking her profusely for her goodness. The young lady behind the counter smiles bitterly, and now looks as if butter would not melt in her mouth. I, assuming the practical, mention the class of goods referred to by Fräulein Sartorius, which she unwillingly brings forth, and we straightway purchase. The errand accomplished, Eugen takes Sigmund by the hand, makes a grand bow to the young woman, and instructs his son to take off his hat, and, this process being complete, we sally forth again, and half-way home Eugen remarks that it was very kind of that young lady to help us.

"Very," I assent dryly, and when Sigmund has contributed the artless remark that all the ladies laughed at us and looked at us, and has been told by his father not to be self-conceited, for that no one can *possibly* wish to look at us, we arrive at home, and the stockings are tried on.

Constantly I saw this willingness to charm on the part of women: constantly the same utter ignorance of any such thought on the part of Eugen, who was continually expressing his surprise at the kindness of people, and adding with the gravest simplicity that he had always found it so, at which announcement Karl laughed till he had to hold his sides.

And Sigmund? Since the day when Courvoisier had said to me, slowly and with difficulty, the words about parting, he had mentioned the subject twice—always with the same intention expressed. Once it was when I had



been out during the evening, and he had not. I came into our sitting-room and found it in darkness. A light came from the inner room, and, going towards it, I found that he had placed the lamp upon a distant stand, and was sitting by the child's crib; his arms folded; his face calm and sad. He rose when he saw me, brought the lamp into the parlor again, and said:

"Pardon, Friedel, that I left you without light. The time of parting will come, you know, and I was taking a look in anticipation of the time when there will be no one there to look at."

I bowed. There was a slight smile upon his lips, but I would rather have heard a broken voice and seen a mien less serene.

The second, and only time, up to now, and the events I am coming to, was once when he had been giving Sigmund a music-lesson, as we called it—that is to say, Eugen took his violin and played a melody, but incorrectly, and Sigmund told him every time a wrong note was played, or false time kept. Eugen sat, giving a look now and then at the boy, whose small, delicate face was bright with intelligence, whose dark eyes blazed with life and fire, and whose every gesture betrayed spirit, grace, and quick understanding. A child for a father to be proud of. No meanness there; no littleness in the fine, high-bred features; everything that the father's heart could wish, except perhaps some little want of robustness; one might have desired that the limbs were less exquisitely graceful and delicate—more stout and robust.

As Eugen laid aside his violin, he drew the child towards him and asked (what I had never heard him ask before):

"What wilt thou be, Sigmund, when thou art a man?"

"*Ja, lieber Vater*, I will be just like thee."

"How just like me?"

"I will do what thou dost."

"So! Thou wilt be a *Musiker* like me and Friedel?"

"*Ja wol!*" said Sigmund; but something else seemed to weigh upon his small mind. He eyed his father with a reflective look, then looked down at his own small hands and slender limbs (his legs were cased in *the* new stockings).

"How?" inquired his father.

"I should like to be a musician," said Sigmund, who had a fine confidence in his sire, and confided his every thought to him.

"I don't know how to say it," he went on, resting his elbows upon Eugen's knee, and propping his chin upon his two small fists, he looked up into his father's face.

"Friedhelm is a musician, but he is not like thee," he pursued. Eugen reddened: I laughed.

"True as can be, Sigmund," I said.

"'I would I were as honest a man,'" said Eugen, slightly altering *Hamlet:* but as he spoke English I contented myself with shaking my head at him.

"I like Friedel," went on Sigmund. "I love him: he is good. But thou, *mein Vater*——"

"Well?" asked Eugen again.

"I *will* be like thee," said the boy vehemently, his

eyes filling with tears. "I *will*. Thou saidst that men who try can do all they will—and I will, I will."

"Why, my child?"

It was a long, earnest look that the child gave the man. Eugen had said to me some few days before, and I had fully agreed with him,—

"That child's life is one strife after the beautiful, in art and nature, and life—how will he succeed in the search?"

I thought of this—it flashed subtly through my mind as Sigmund gazed at his father with a childish adoration—then, suddenly springing round his neck, said passionately:

"Thou art so beautiful—so beautiful! I *must* be like thee."

Eugen bit his lip momentarily, saying to me in English:

"I am his God, you see, Friedel. What will he do when he finds out what a common clay figure it was he worshipped?"

But he had not the heart to banter the child: only held the little clinging figure to his breast: the breast which Sigmund recognized as his heaven.

It was after this that Eugen said to me when we were alone:

"It must come before he thinks less of me than he does now, Friedel."

To these speeches I could never make any answer, and he always had the same singular smile—the same paleness about the lips, and unnatural light in the eyes when he spoke so.

He had accomplished one great feat in those three years —he had won over to himself his comrades, and that without, so to speak, actively laying himself out to do so. He had struck us all as something so *very* different from the rest of us, that on his arrival, and for some time afterwards, there lingered some idea that he must be opposed to us. But I very soon, and the rest by gradual degrees, got to recognize that though in—not of us, yet he was no natural enemy of ours: if he made no advances, he never avoided or repulsed any, but, on the very contrary, seemed surprised and pleased that any one should take an interest in him. We soon found that he was extremely modest as to his own merits, and eager to acknowledge those of other people.

"And," said Karl Linders once, twirling his moustache, and smiling in the consciousness that his own outward presentment was not to be called repulsive, "he can't help his looks: no fellow can."

At the time of which I speak, his popularity was much greater than he knew, or would have believed if he had been told of it.
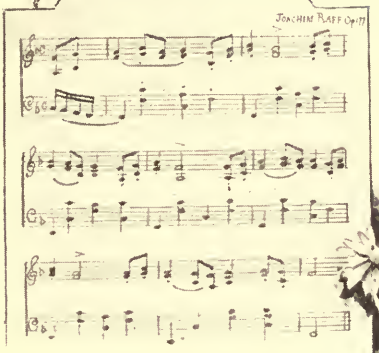
Only between him and von Francius there remained a constant gulf and a continual coldness. Von Francius never stepped aside to make friends: Eugen most certainly never went out of his way to ingratiate himself with von Francius. Courvoisier had been appointed contrary to the wish of von Francius, which perhaps caused the latter to regard him a little coldly—even more coldly than was usual with him, and he was never enthusiastic about any one or anything; while to Eugen there was absolutely nothing in

von Francius which attracted him, save the magnificent *power* of his musical talent—a power which was as calm and cold as himself.

Max von Francius was a man about whom there were various opinions, expressed and unexpressed: he was a person who never spoke of himself, and who contrived to live a life more isolated and apart than any one I have ever known, considering that he went much into society, and mixed a good deal with the world. In every circle in Elberthal which could by any means be called select, his society was eagerly sought, nor did he refuse it. His days were full of engagements; he was consulted, and his opinion deferred to in a singular manner—singular, because he was no sayer of smooth things, but the very contrary: because he hung upon no patron, submitted to no dictation, was in his way an autocrat. This state of things he had brought about entirely by force of his own will, and in utter opposition to precedent, for the former directors had been notoriously under the thumb of certain influential outsiders, who were in reality the directors of the Director. It was the universal feeling that though the Herr Direktor was the busiest man, and had the largest circle of acquaintance of any one in Elberthal, yet that he was less really known than many another man of half his importance. His business as *Musikdirektor* took up much of his time: the rest might have been filled to overflowing with private lessons, but von Francius was not a man to make himself cheap: it was a distinction to be taught by him, the more so as the position or circumstances of a

would-be pupil appeared to make not the very smallest impression upon him. Distinguished for hard, practical common-sense, a ready sneer at anything high-flown or romantic, discouraging not so much enthusiasm as the outward manifestation of it, which he called melodrama, Max von Francius was the cynosure of all eyes in Elberthal, and bore the scrutiny with glacial indifference.

CHAPTER IV



"MAKE yourself quite easy, Herr Concertmeister. No child that was left to my charge was ever known to come to harm."

Thus Frau Schmidt to Eugen, as she stood with dubious smile and folded arms in our parlor, and harangued him, while he and I stood, violin-cases in our hands, in a great hurry, and anxious to be off.

"You are very kind, Frau Schmidt; I hope he will not trouble you."

"He is a well-behaved child, and not nearly so disagreeable and bad to do with as most. And at what time will you be back?"

"That is uncertain. It just depends upon the length of the Probe."

"*Na!* It is all the same. I am going out for a little excursion this afternoon: to the Grafenberg, and I shall take the boy with me."

"Oh, thank you," said Eugen; "that will be very kind.

He wants some fresh air, and I've had no time to take him out. You are *very* kind."

"Trust to me, Herr Concertmeister—trust to me," said she, with the usual imperial wave of her hand, as she at last moved aside from the doorway which she had blocked up, and allowed us to pass out. A last wave of the hand from Eugen to Sigmund, and then we hurried away to the station. We were bound for Cologne, where that year the Lower Rhine *Musikfest* was to be held. It was then somewhat past the middle of April, and the *Fest* came off at Whitsuntide, in the middle of May. We, amongst others, were engaged to strengthen the Cologne orchestra for the occasion, and we were bidden this morning to the first Probe.

We just caught our train, seeing one or two faces of comrades we knew, and in an hour were in Cologne.

"The Tower of Babel," and Raff's Fifth Symphony, that called "Lenore," were the subjects we had been summoned to practise. They, together with Beethoven's Choral Fantasia and some solos were to come off on the third evening of the *Fest*.

The Probe lasted a long time: it was three o'clock when we left the Concert Hall, after five hours' hard work.

"Come along, Eugen," cried I, "we have just time to catch the three ten, but only just."

"Don't wait for me," he answered with an absent look. "I don't think I shall come by it. Look after yourself, Friedel, and *Auf Wiedersehen!*"

I was scarcely surprised, for I had seen that the music

had deeply moved him, and I can understand the wish of any man to be alone with the remembrance or continuance of such emotions. Accordingly I took my way to the station, and there met one or two of my Elberthal comrades, who had been on the same errand as myself, and, like me, were returning home.

Lively remarks upon the probable features of the coming *Fest*, and the circulation of any amount of loose and hazy gossip respecting composers and soloists followed, and we all went to our usual restauration and dined together. There was an opera that night to which we had Probe that afternoon, and I scarcely had time to rush home and give a look at Sigmund before it was time to go again to the theatre.

Eugen's place remained empty. For the first time since he had come into the orchestra he was absent from his post, and I wondered what could have kept him.

Taking my way home, very tired, with fragments of airs from *Czar und Zimmermann*, in which I had just been playing, the "March" from "Lenore," and scraps of choruses and airs from the *Thurm zu Babel*, all ringing in my head in a confused jumble, I sprang up the stairs (up which I used to plod so wearily and so spiritlessly), and went into the sitting-room. Darkness! After I had stood still and gazed about for a time, my eyes grew accustomed to the obscurity. I perceived that a dim gray light still stole in at the open window, and that some one reposing in an easy-chair was faintly shadowed out against it.

"Is that you, Friedhelm?" asked Eugen's voice.

"*Lieber Himmel!* Are you there? What are you doing in the dark?"

"Light the lamp, my Friedel! Dreams belong to darkness, and facts to light. Sometimes I wish light and facts had never been invented."

I found the lamp and lighted it, carried it up to him and stood before him, contemplating him curiously. He lay back in our one easy-chair, his hands clasped behind his head, his legs outstretched. He had been idle for the first time, I think, since I had known him. He had been sitting in the dark, not even pretending to do anything.

"There *are* things new under the sun," said I, in mingled amusement and amaze. "Absent from your post, to the alarm and surprise of all who know you, here I find you mooning in the darkness, and when I illuminate you, you smile up at me in a somewhat imbecile manner, and say nothing. What may it portend?"

He roused himself, sat up, and looked at me with an ambiguous half smile.

"Most punctual of men! most worthy, honest, fidgety old friend," said he, with still the same suppressed smile, "how I honor you! How I wish I could emulate you! How I wish I were like you! and yet, Friedel, old boy, you have missed something this afternoon."

"So! I should like to know what you have been doing. Give an account of yourself."

"I have erred and gone astray, and have found it pleasant. I have done that which I ought not to have done, and am sorry, for the sake of morality and propriety, to



have to say that it was delightful; far more delightful than to go on doing just what one ought to do. Say, good Mentor, does it matter? For this occasion only. Never again, as I am a living man."

"I wish you would speak plainly," said I, first putting the lamp and then myself upon the table. I swung my legs about and looked at him.

"And not go on telling you stories like that of *Münchhausen*, in Arabesks, eh? I will be explicit; I will use the indicative mood, present tense. Now then! I like Cologne, I like the cathedral of that town; I like the Hôtel du Nord: and, above all, I *love* the railway station."

"Are you raving?"

"Did you ever examine the Cologne railway station?" he went on, lighting a cigar. "There is a great big waiting-room, which they lock up; there is a delightful place in which you may get lost, and find yourself suddenly alone in a deserted wing of the building, with an impertinent porter, who doesn't understand one word of Eng—of your native tongue——"

"Are you *mad?*" was my varied comment.

"And while you are in the greatest distress, separated from your friends, who have gone on to Elberthal (like mine), and struggling to make this porter understand you, you may be encountered by a mooning individual—a native of the land—and you may address him. He drives the fumes of music from his brain, and looks at you, and finds you charming—more than charming. My *dear* Friedhelm, 'the look in your eye is quite painful to see.' By the

exercise of a little diplomacy, which, as you are charmingly *naïve*, you do not see through, he manages to seal an alliance by which you and he agree to pass three or four hours in each other's society, for mutual instruction and entertainment. The entertainment consists of cutlets, potatoes —the kind called *Kartoffeln frites*, which they give you very good at the *Nord*—and the wine known to us as Doctorberger. The instruction is varied, and is carried on chiefly in the aisle of the Kölner Dom, to the sound of music. And when he is quite spellbound, in a magic circle, a kind of golden net or cloud, he pulls out an earthly watch, made of dust and dross ('More fool he,' your eye says, and you are quite right), and sees that time is advancing. A whole army of horned things with stings, called feelings of propriety, honor, correctness, the right thing, etc., come in thick battalions in *Sturmschritt* upon him, and with a hasty word he hurries her—he gets off to the station. There is still an hour, for both are coming to Elberthal—an hour of unalloyed delight; then "—he snapped his fingers— "a droschke, an address, a crack of the whip, and *ade!*"

I sat and stared at him while he wound up this rhodomontade by singing:

"Ade, ade, ade!
Ja, Scheiden und Meiden thut weh!"

"You are too young and fair," he presently resumed, "too slight and sober for apoplexy; but a painful fear seizes me that your mental faculties are under some slight cloud. There is a vacant look in your usually radiant eye; a want of intelligence in the curve of your rosy lip——"

"Eugen! Stop that string of fantastic rubbish! Where have you been, and what have you been doing?"

"I have *not* deserved that from you. Haven't I been telling you all this time where I have been and what I have been doing? There is a brutality in your behavior which is to a refined mind most lamentable."

"But *where* have you been, and *what* have you done?"

"Another time, *mein Lieber*—another time!"

With this misty promise I had to content myself. I speculated upon the subject for that evening, and came to the conclusion that he had invented the whole story, to see whether I would believe it (for we had all a reprehensible habit of that kind); and very soon the whole circumstance dropped from my memory.

On the following morning I had occasion to go to the public Eye Hospital. Eugen and I had interested ourselves to procure a ticket for free, or almost free, treatment as an out-patient for a youth whom we knew—one of the second violins—whose sight was threatened, and who, poor boy, could not afford to pay for proper treatment. Eugen being busy, I went to receive the ticket.

It was the first time I had been in the place. I was shown into a room with the light somewhat obscured, and there had to wait some few minutes. Every one had something the matter with his or her eyes—at least, so I thought, until my own fell upon a girl who leaned, looking a little tired and a little disappointed, against a tall desk at one side of the room.

She struck me on the instant, as no feminine appearance

had ever struck me before. She, like myself, seemed to be waiting for some one or something. She was tall and supple in figure, and her face was girlish and very innocent-looking; and yet, both in her attitude and countenance, there was a little pride, some hauteur. It was evidently natural to her, and sat well upon her. A slight, but exquisitely-moulded figure, different from those of our stalwart Elberthaler *Mädchen*—finer, more refined and distinguished, and a face to dream of. I thought it then, and I say it now. Masses, almost too thick and heavy, of dark auburn hair, with here and there a glint of warmer hue, framed that beautiful face—half woman's, half child's. Dark gray eyes, with long dark lashes and brows; cheeks naturally very pale, but sensitive, like some delicate alabaster, showing the red at every wave of emotion; something racy, piquant, unique, enveloped the whole appearance of this young girl. I had never seen anything at all like her before.

She looked wearily round the room, and sighed a little. Then her eyes met mine; and, seeing the earnestness with which I looked at her, she turned away, and a slight—very slight—flush appeared in her cheek.

I had time to notice (for everything about her interested me) that her dress was of the very plainest and simplest kind—so plain as to be almost poor—and its fashion not of the newest, even in Elberthal.

Then my name was called out. I received my ticket, and went to the Probe at the theatre.



CHAPTER V

"Wishes are pilgrims to the vale of tears."

A WEEK—ten days passed. I did not see the beautiful girl again—nor did I forget her. One night, at the opera, I found her. It was *Lohengrin*—but she has told all that story herself—how Eugen came in late (he had a trick of never coming in till the last minute, and I used to think he had some reason for it)—and the recognition and the cut direct, first on her side, then on his.

Eugen and I walked home together, arm-in-arm, and I felt provoked with him.

"I say, Eugen, did you see the young lady with Vincent and the others in the first row of the Parquet?"

"I saw some six or eight ladies of various ages in the first row of the Parquet. Some were old, and some were young. One had a knitted shawl over her head, which she kept on during the whole of the performance."

"Don't be so maddening. I said the young lady with Vincent, and Fräulein Sartorius. By-the-bye, Eugen, do you know, or have you ever known her?"

"Whom?"

"Fräulein Sartorius."

"Who is she?"

"Oh, bother! The young lady I mean sat exactly opposite to you and me—a beautiful young girl; an *Engländerin*—fair, with that hair that we never see here, and——"

"In a brown hat—sitting next to Vincent. I saw her—yes."

"She saw you too."

"She must have been blind if she hadn't."

"Have you seen her before?"

"I have seen her before—yes."

"And spoken to her?"

"Even spoken to her."

"Do tell me what it all means."

"Nothing."

"But, Eugen——"

"Are you so struck with her, Friedel! Don't lose your heart to her, I warn you."

"Why?" I inquired wilily, hoping the answer would give me some clue to his acquaintance with her.

"Because, *mein Bester*, she is a cut above you and me—in a different sphere—one that we know nothing about. What is more, she knows it, and shows it. Be glad that you cannot lay yourself open to the snub that I got to-night."

There was so much bitterness in his tone that I was surprised. But a sudden remembrance flashed into my mind of his strange remarks after I had left him that day at Cologne, and I laughed to myself, nor, when he asked me,

would I tell him why. That evening he had very little to say to Karl Linders and myself.

Eugen never spoke to me of the beautiful girl who had behaved so strangely that evening, though we saw her again and again.

Sometimes I used to meet her in the street, in company with a dark, plain girl, Anna Sartorius, who, I fancied, always surveyed Eugen with a look of recognition. The two young women formed in appearance an almost startling contrast. She came to all the concerts, as if she made music a study—generally she was with a stout, good-natured-looking German Fräulein, and the young Englishman, Vincent. There was always something rather melancholy about her grace and beauty.

Most beautiful she was: with long, slender, artist-like hands, the face a perfect oval, but the features more piquant than regular—sometimes a subdued fire glowed in her eyes and compressed her lips, which removed her altogether from the category of spiritless beauties—a genus for which I never had the least taste.

One morning, Courvoisier and I, standing just within the entrance to the theatre orchestra, saw two people go by. One, a figure well enough known to every one in Elberthal, and especially to us—that of Max von Francius. Did I ever say that von Francius was an exceedingly handsome fellow, in a certain dark, clean-shaved style? On that occasion he was speaking with more animation than was usual with him, and the person to whom he had unbent so far was the fair Englishwoman—this enigmatical beauty

who had cut my friend at the opera. She also was looking animated and very beautiful: her face turned to his with a smile—a glad, gratified smile. He was saying:

"But in the next lesson, you know——"

They passed on. I turned, to ask Eugen if he had seen. I needed not to put the question. He *had* seen. There was a forced smile upon his lips. Before I could speak he had said:

"It's time to go in, Friedel; come along!" With which he turned into the theatre, and I followed thoughtfully.

Then it was rumored that at the coming concert—the benefit of von Francius—a new soprano was to appear—a young lady of whom report used varied tones: some believable facts at least we learnt about her. Her name, they said, was Wedderburn; she was an Englishwoman, and had a most wonderful voice. The Herr Direktor took a very deep interest in her. He not only gave her lessons; he had *asked* to give her lessons, and intended to form of her an artiste who should one day be to the world a kind of Patti, Lucca, or Nilsson.

I had no doubt in my own mind as to who she was, but for all that I felt considerable excitement on the evening of the Hauptprobe to the *Verlorene Paradies*.

Yes—I was right. Miss Wedderburn, the pupil of von Francius, of whom so much was prophesied, *was* the beautiful forlorn-looking English girl. The feeling which grew upon me that evening, and which I never found reason afterwards to alter, was that she was modest, gentle, yet

spirited, very gifted, and an artiste by nature and gift, yet sadly ill at ease and out of place in that world into which von Francius wished to lead her.

She sat quite near to Eugen and me, and I saw how alone she was, and how she seemed to feel her loneliness. I saw how certain young ladies drew themselves together, and looked at her (it was on this occasion that I first began to notice the silent behavior of women towards each other, and the more I have observed, the more has my wonder grown and increased), and whispered behind their music, and shrugged their shoulders when von Francius, seeing how isolated she seemed, bent forward and said a few kind words to her.

I liked him for it. After all, he was a man. But his distinguishing the child did not add to the delights of her position—rather made it worse. I put myself in her place as well as I could, and felt her feelings when von Francius introduced her to one of the young ladies near her, who first stared at him, then at her, then inclined her head a little forward and a little backward, turned her back upon Miss Wedderburn, and appeared lost in conversation of the deepest importance with her neighbor. And I thought of the words which Karl Linders had said to us in haste and anger, after a disappointment he had lately had, "*Das Weib ist der Teufel.*" Yes, Woman is the Devil sometimes, thought I, and a mean kind of devil too. A female Mephistopheles would not have damned Gretchen's soul, nor killed her body: she would have left the latter on this earthly sphere, and damned her reputation.

Von Francius was a clever man, but he made a grand mistake that night, unless he were desirous of making his *protégée* as uncomfortable as possible. How could those ladies feel otherwise than insulted at seeing the man of ice so suddenly attentive and bland to a nobody, an upstart, and a beautiful one?

The Probe continued, and still she sat alone and unspoken to, her only acquaintance or companion seeming to be Fräulein Sartorius, with whom she had come in. I saw how, when von Francius called upon her to do her part, and the looks which had hitherto been averted from her were now turned pitilessly and unwinkingly upon her, she quailed. She bit her lip; her hand trembled. I turned to Eugen with a look which said volumes. He sat with his arms folded, and his face perfectly devoid of all expression, gazing straight before him.

Miss Wedderburn might have been satisfied to the full with her revenge. That was a voice! such a volume of pure, exquisite melody as I had rarely heard. After hearing that, all doubts were settled. The gift might be a blessing or a curse—let every one decide that for himself, according to his style of thinking—but it was there. She possessed the power which put her out of the category of commonplace, and had the most melodious *Open, Sesame!* with which to besiege the doors of the courts in which dwell artists—creative and interpretative.

The performance finished the gap between her and her companions. Their looks said, "You are not one of us." My angry spirit said, "No; you can never be like her."

She seemed half afraid of what she had done when it was over, and shrank into herself with downcast eyes and nervous quivering of the lips at the subdued applause of the men. I wanted to applaud too, but I looked at Eugen. I had instinctively given him some share in the affairs of this lovely creature—a share which he always strenuously repudiated, both tacitly and openly.

Nevertheless, when I saw him I abstained from applauding, knowing, by a lightning-quick intuition, that it would be highly irritating to him. He showed no emotion; if he had done, I should not have thought the occasion was anything special to him. It was his absurd gravity, stony inexpressiveness, which impressed me with the fact that he *was* moved—moved against his will and his judgment. He could no more help approving both of her and her voice than he could help admiring a perfect, half-opened rose.

It was over, and we went out of the Saal, across the road, and home.

Sigmund, who had not been very well that day, was awake, and restless. Eugen took him up, wrapped him in a little bed-gown, carried him into the other room, and sat down with him. The child rested his head on the loved breast, and was soothed.

* * * * *

She had gone; the door had closed after her. Eugen turned to me, and took Sigmund into his arms again.

"Papa, who is the beautiful lady, and why did you speak so harshly to her? Why did you make her cry?"

The answer, though ostensibly spoken to Sigmund, was a revelation to *me*.

"That I may not have to cry myself," said Eugen, kissing him.

"Could the lady make thee cry?" demanded Sigmund, sitting up, much excited at the idea.

Another kiss and a half laugh was the answer. Then he bade him go to sleep, as he did not understand what he was talking about.

By-and-by Sigmund did drop to sleep. Eugen carried him to his bed, tucked him up, and returned. We sat in silence—such an uncomfortable, constrained silence, as had never before been between us. I had a book before me. I saw no word of it. I could not drive the vision away—the lovely, pleading face, the penitence. Good heavens! How *could* he repulse her as he had done? Her repeated request that he would take that money—what did it all mean? And, moreover, my heart was sore that he had concealed it all from me. About the past I felt no resentment; there was a secret there which I respected; but I was cut up at this. The more I thought of it, the keener was the pain I felt.

"Friedel!"

I looked up. Eugen was leaning across the table, and his hand was stretched towards me; his eyes looked full into mine. I answered his look, but I was not clear yet.

"Forgive me!"

"Forgive thee what?"

"This playing with thy confidence."

"Don't mention it," I forced myself to say, but the sore feeling still remained. "You have surely a right to keep your affairs to yourself if you choose."

"You will not shake hands? Well, perhaps I have no right to ask it; but I should like to tell you all about it."

I put my hand into his.

"I was wounded," said I, "it is true. But it is over."

"Then listen, Friedel!"

He told me the story of his meeting with Miss Wedderburn. All he said of the impression she had made upon him was:

"I thought her very charming, and the loveliest creature I had ever seen. And about the trains. It stands in this way. I thought a few hours of her society would make me very happy, and would be like—oh, well! I knew that in the future, if she ever *should* see me again, she would either treat me with distant politeness as an inferior, or, supposing she discovered that I had cheated her, would cut me dead. And as it did not matter, as I could not possibly be an acquaintance of hers in the future, I gave myself that pleasure then. It has turned out a mistake on my part, but that is nothing new; my whole existence has been a monstrous mistake. However, now she sees what a churl's nature was under my fair-seeming exterior, her pride will show her what to do. She will take a wrong view of my character, but what *does* that signify? She will say that to be deceitful first and uncivil afterwards are the main features of the German character, and when she is at

Cologne on her honeymoon, she will tell her bridegroom about this adventure, and he will remark that the fellow wanted horsewhipping, and she——"

"There! You have exercised your imagination quite sufficiently. Then you intend to keep up this farce of not recognizing her. Why?"

He hesitated, looked as nearly awkward as he could, and said a little constrainedly:

"Because I think it will be for the best."

"For you or for her?" I inquired, not very fairly, but I could not resist it.

Eugen flushed all over his face.

"What a question!" was all he said.

"I do not think it such a remarkable question. Either you have grown exceedingly nervous as to your own strength of resistance, or you fear for hers."

"Friedhelm," said he in a cutting voice, "that is a tone which I should not have believed you capable of taking. It is vulgar, my dear fellow, and uncalled for; and it is so unlike you that I am astonished. If you had been one of the other fellows——"

I fired up.

"Excuse me, Eugen, it might be vulgar if I were merely chaffing you, but I'm not; and I think, after what you have told me, that I have said very little. I am not so sure of her despising you. She looks much more as if she were distressed at your despising her."

"Pre—pos—ter—ous!"

"If you can mention an instance in her behavior this

evening which looked as if she were desirous of snubbing you, I should be obliged by your mentioning it," I continued.

"Well—well——"

"Well—well. If she had wished to snub you she would have sent you that money through the post, and made an end of it. She simply desired, as was evident all along, to apologize for having been rude to a person who had been kind to her. *I* can quite understand it, and I am not sure that your behavior will not have the very opposite effect to that you expect."

"I think you are mistaken. However, it does not matter: our paths lie quite apart. She will have plenty of other things to take up her time and thoughts. Anyhow I am glad that you and I are quits once more."

So was I. We said no more upon the subject, but I always felt as if a kind of connecting link existed between my friend and me, and that beautiful, solitary English girl.

The link was destined to become yet closer. The concert was over at which she sang. She had a success. I see she has not mentioned it; a success which isolated her still more from her companions, inasmuch as it made her more distinctly professional and them more severely virtuous.

One afternoon, when Eugen and I happened to have nothing to do, we took Sigmund to the Grafenberg. We wandered about in the fir-wood, and at last came to a pause and rested. Eugen lay upon his back and gazed up

into the thickness of brown-green fir above, and perhaps guessed at the heaven beyond the dark shade. I sat and stared before me through the straight red-brown stems, across the ground,

"With sheddings from the pining umbrage tinged,"

to an invisible beyond which had charms for me, and was a kind of symphonic beauty in my mind. Sigmund lay flat upon his stomach, kicked his heels, and made intricate patterns with the fir needles, while he hummed a gentle song to himself in a small, sweet voice, true as a lark's, but sadder. There was utter stillness and utter calm all around.

Presently Eugen's arm stole around Sigmund and drew him closer and closer to him, and they continued to look at each other until a mutual smile broke upon both faces, and the boy said, his whole small frame as well as his voice quivering (the poor little fellow had nerves that vibrated to the slightest emotion): "I love thee."

A light leaped into the father's eyes: a look of pain followed it quickly.

"And I shall never leave thee," said Sigmund.

Eugen parried the necessity of speaking by a kiss.

"I love thee too, Friedel," continued he, taking my hand. "We are very happy together, aren't we?" And he laughed placidly to himself.

Eugen, as if stung by some tormenting thought, sprang up, and we left the wood.

Oh, far-back, bygone day! There was a soft light over



you shed by a kindly sun. That was a time in which joy ran a golden thread through the gray homespun of every-day life.

Back to the restauration at the foot of the Berg, where Sigmund was supplied with milk, and Eugen and I with beer, where we sat at a little wooden table in a garden, and the pleasant clack of friendly conversation sounded around; where the women tried to make friends with Sigmund, and the girls whispered behind their coffee-cups, or (*pace*, elegant fiction!) their beer glasses, and always happened to be looking up if our eyes roved that way. Two poor *Musiker* and a little boy: persons of no importance whatever, who could scrape their part in the symphonie with some intelligence, and feel they had done their duty. Well, well! it is not all of us who can do even so much. I know some instruments that are always out of tune. Let us be complacent where we justly can. The opportunities are few.

We took our way home. The days were long, and it was yet light when we returned and found the reproachful face of Frau Schmidt looking for us, and her arms open to receive the weary little lad who had fallen asleep on his father's shoulder.

I went upstairs, and, by a natural instinct, to the window. Those facing it were open: some one moved in the room. Two chords of a piano were struck. Some one came and stood by the window, shielded her eyes from the rays of the setting sun which streamed down the street, and looked westwards. Eugen was passing behind me. I

pulled him to the window, and we both looked—silently, gravely.

The girl dropped her hand: her eyes fell upon us. The color mounted to her cheek: she turned away and went to the interior of the room. It was May Wedderburn.

"*Also!*" said Eugen, after a pause. "A new neighbor; it reminds me of one of Andersen's *Mährchen*, but I don't know which."

BOOK IV

CHILDREN OF THE WORLD

CHAPTER I

" For though he lived aloof from ken,
The world's unwitnessed denizen,
The love within him stirs
Abroad, and with the hearts of men
His own confers."

" The story of my life from day to day " was dull enough, same enough for some time after I went to live at the Wehrhahn. I was studying hard, and my only variety was the letters I had from home; not very cheering, these. One, which I received from Adelaide, puzzled me somewhat. After speaking of her coming marriage in a way which made me sad and uncomfortable, she condescended to express her approval of what I was doing, and went on:

" I am catholic in my tastes. I suppose all our friends would faint at the idea of there being a singer in the family. Now, I should rather like you to be a singer —only be a great one—not a little twopenny-half-penny person who has to advertise for engagements.

" Now I am going to give you some advice. This Herr

von Francius—your teacher or whatever he is. Be cautious what you are about with him. I don't say more, but I say that again. Be cautious! Don't burn your fingers. Now, I have not much time, and I hate writing letters, as you know. In a week I am to be married, and then—*nous verrons*. We go to Paris first, and then on to Rome, where we shall winter—to gratify *my* taste, I wonder, or Sir Peter's, for mouldering ruins, ancient pictures, and the Coliseum by moonlight? I have no doubt that we shall do our duty by the respectable old structures. Remember what I said, and write to me now and then.—A."

I frowned and puzzled a little over this letter. Be cautious? In what possible way could I be cautious? What need could there be for it when all that passed between me and von Francius was the daily singing lesson at which he was so strict and severe, sometimes so sharp and cutting with me. I saw him then: I saw him also at the constant Proben to concerts whose season had already begun: Proben to the *Passionsmusik*, the Messiah, etc. At one or two of these concerts I was to sing. I did not like the idea, but I could not make von Francius see it as I did. He said I must sing—it was part of my studies, and I was fain to bend to his will.

Von Francius—I looked at Adelaide's letter, and smiled again. Von Francius had kept his word: he had behaved to me as a kind elder brother. He seemed instinctively to understand the wish, which was very strong on my part, not to live entirely at Miss Hallam's expense—to provide, partially at any rate, for myself, if possible. He helped

me to do this. Now he brought me some music to be copied: now he told me of a young lady who wanted lessons in English—now of one little thing—now of another, which kept me, to my pride and joy, in such slender pocket-money as I needed. Truly, I used to think in those days, it does not need much money nor much room for a person like me to keep her place in the world. I wished to trouble no one—only to work as hard as I could, and do the work that was set for me as well as I knew how. I had my wish, and so far was not unhappy.

But what did Adelaide mean? True, I had once described von Francius to her as young, that is youngish, clever, and handsome. Did she, remembering my well-known susceptibility, fear that I might fall in love with him, and compromise myself by some silly *Schwärmerei?* I laughed aloud all by myself, at the very idea of such a thing. Fall in love with von Francius, and—my eyes fell upon the two windows over the way. No: my heart was pure of the faintest feeling for him, save that of respect, gratitude, and liking founded at that time more on esteem than spontaneous growth. And he—I smiled at that idea too.

In all my long interviews with von Francius, throughout our intercourse he maintained one unvaried tone, that of a kind, frank, protecting interest, with something of the patron on his part. He would converse with me about Schiller and Göthe, true; he would also caution me against such and such shopkeepers as extortioners, and tell me the place where they gave the largest discount on

music paid for on the spot: would discuss the *Waldstein* or *Appassionata* with me, or the beauties of Rubinstein, or the deep meanings of Schumann, also the relative cost of living *en pension* or providing for oneself.

No. Adelaide was mistaken. I wished parenthetically that she could make the acquaintance of von Francius, and learn *how* mistaken—and again my eyes fell upon the opposite windows. Friedhelm Helfen leaned from one, holding fast Courvoisier's boy. The rich Italian coloring of the lovely young face; the dusky hair; the glow upon the cheeks, the deep blue of his serge dress, made the effect of a warmly-tinted southern flower: it was a flower-face too: delicate and rich at once.

Adelaide's letter dropped unheeded to the floor. Those two could not see me, and I had a joy in watching them.

To say, however, that I actually watched my opposite neighbors would not be true. I studiously avoided watching them: never sat in the window; seldom showed myself at it, though in passing I sometimes allowed myself to linger and so had glimpses of those within. They were three and I was one. They were the happier by two. Or if I knew that they were out, that a Probe was going on, or an opera or concert, there was nothing that I liked better than to sit for a time and look to the opposite windows. They were nearly always open, as were also mine, for the heat of the stove was oppressive to me, and I preferred to temper it with a little of the raw outside air. I used sometimes to hear from those opposite rooms the practising or playing of passages on the violin or violoncello—scales,

shakes, long complicated flourishes and phrases. Sometimes I heard the very strains that I had to sing to. Airs, scraps of airs, snatches from operas, concertos and symphonies. They were always humming and singing things. They came home haunted with "The Last Rose," from *Martha*—now some air from *Faust*, *Der Freischütz*, or *Tannhäuser*.

But one air was particular to Eugen, who seemed to be perfectly possessed by it—that which I had heard him humming when I first met him—the March from *Lenore*. He whistled it and sang it; played it on violin, 'cello and piano: hummed it first thing in the morning and last thing at night; harped upon it until in despair his companion threw books and music at him, and he, dodging them, laughed, begged pardon, was silent for five minutes, and then the March *da Capo*, set in a halting kind of measure to the ballad.

By way of a slight and wholesome variety there was the whole repertory of *Volkslieder*, from

> "Du, du, liegst mir im Herzen;
> Du, du, liegst mir im Sinn,"

up to

> "Mädele, ruck, ruck, ruck
> An meine grüne Seite."

Sometimes they—one or both of them with the boy—might be seen at the window leaning out, whistling or talking. When doors banged and quick steps rushed up or down the stairs two steps at a time I knew it was Courvoisier. Friedhelm Helfen's movements were slower and more

sedate. I grew to know his face as well as Eugen's, and to like it better the more I saw of it. A quite young, almost boyish face, with an inexpressibly pure, true, and *good* expression upon the mouth and in the dark brown eyes. Reticent, as most good faces are, but a face which made you desire to know the owner of it, made you feel that you could trust him in any trial. His face reminded me in a distant manner of two others, also faces of musicians, but greater in their craft than he, they being creators and pioneers, while he was only a disciple—of Beethoven and of the living master, Rubinstein. A gentle, though far from weak face, and such a contrast in expression and everything else to that of my musician, as to make me wonder sometimes whether they had been drawn to each other from very oppositeness of disposition and character. That they were very great friends I could not doubt; that the leadership was on Courvoisier's side was no less evident. Eugen's affection for Helfen seemed to have something fatherly in it, while I could see that both joined in an absorbing worship of the boy, who was a very Crœsus in love if in nothing else. Sigmund had, too, an adorer in a third musician, a violoncellist, one of their comrades, who apparently spent much of his spare substance in purchasing presents of toys and books and other offerings, which he laid at the shrine of St. Sigmund, with what success I could not tell. Beyond this young fellow Karl Linders, they had not many visitors. Young men used occasionally to appear with violin-cases in their hands, coming for lessons, probably.

All these things I saw without absolutely watching for them; they made that impression upon me which the most trifling facts connected with a person around whom cling all one's deepest pleasures and deepest pains ever do and must make. I was glad to know them, but at the same time they impressed the loneliness and aloofness of my own life more decidedly upon me.

I remember one small incident which at the time it happened struck home to me. My windows were open; it was an October afternoon, mild and sunny. The yellow light shone with a peaceful warmth upon the afternoon quietness of the street. Suddenly that quietness was broken. The sound of music, the peculiar blatant noise of trumpets, smote the air. It came nearer, and with it the measured tramp of feet. I rose and went to look out. A Hussar regiment was passing; before them was borne a soldier's coffin: they carried a comrade to his grave. The music they played was the "Funeral March for the Death of a Hero," from the *Sinfonia Eroica*. Muffled, slow, grand, and mournful, it went wailing and throbbing by. The procession passed slowly on in the October sunshine, along the *Schadowstrasse*, turning off by the *Hofgarten*, and so on to the cemetery. I leaned out of the window and looked after it—forgotten all outside, till just as the last of the procession passed by my eyes fell upon Courvoisier going into his house, and who presently entered the room. He was unperceived by Friedhelm and Sigmund, who were looking after the procession. The child's face was earnest, almost solemn—he had not seen his father come up.

I saw Helfen's lips caress Sigmund's loose black hair that waved just beneath them.

Then I saw a figure—only a black shadow to my eyes which were dazzled by the sun—come behind them. One hand was laid upon Helfen's shoulder, another turned the child's chin. What a change! Friedhelm's grave face smiled: Sigmund sprang aside, made a leap to his father who stooped to him, and clasping his arms tight round his neck was raised up in his arms.

They were all satisfied—all smiling—all happy. I turned away. That was a home—that was a meeting of three affections. What more *could* they want? I shut the window—shut it all out, and myself with it into the cold, feeling my lips quiver. It was very fine, this life of independence and self-support, but it was dreadfully lonely.

The days went on. Adelaide was now Lady Le Marchant. She had written to me again, and warned me once more to be careful what I was about. She had said that she liked her life—at least she said so in her first two or three letters, and then there fell a sudden utter silence about herself, which seemed to me ominous.

Adelaide had always acted upon the assumption that Sir Peter was a far from strong-minded individual, with a certain hardness and cunning perhaps, in relation to money matters, but nothing that a clever wife with a strong enough sense of her own privileges could not overcome.

She said nothing to me about herself. She told me about Rome; who were there; what they did and looked like; what she wore: what compliments were paid to her—that was all.

Stella told me my letters were dull—and I dare say they were—and that there was no use in her writing, because nothing ever happened in Skernford, which was also true.

And for Eugen, we were on exactly the same terms—or rather no terms—as before. Opposite neighbors, and as far removed as if we had lived at the antipodes.

My life, as time went on, grew into a kind of fossilized dream, in which I rose up and lay down, practised so many hours a day, ate and drank and took my lesson, and it seemed as if I had been living so for years, and should continue to live on so to the end of my days—until one morning my eyes would not open again, and for me the world would have come to an end.

CHAPTER II

"And nearer still shall farther be,
And words shall plague and vex and buffet thee."

It was December, close upon Christmas. Winter at last in real earnest. A black frost. The earth bound in fetters of iron. The land gray; the sky steel; the wind a dagger. The trees, leafless and stark, rattled their shrivelled boughs together in that wind.

It met you at corners, and froze the words out of your mouth; it whistled a low, fiendish, malignant whistle round the houses; as vicious, and little louder than the buzz of a mosquito. It swept, thin, keen and cutting, down the Königsallée, and blew fine black dust into one's face.

It cut up the skaters upon the pond in the *Neue Anlage*,

which was in the centre of the town, and comparatively sheltered; but it was in its glory whistling across the flat fields leading to the great skating-ground of Elberthal in general—the *Schwanenspiegel* at the Grafenbergerdahl.

The Grafenberg was a low chain of what, for want of a better name, may be called hills, lying to the north of Elberthal. The country all around this unfortunate apology for a range of hills was, if possible, flatter than ever. The Grafenbergerdahl was, properly, no "dale" at all, but a broad plain of meadows, with the railway cutting them at one point; then diverging and running on under the Grafenberg.

One vast meadow which lay, if possible, a trifle lower than the rest, was flooded regularly by the autumn rains, but not deeply. It was frozen over now, and formed a model skating-place, and so, apparently, thought the townspeople, for they came out, singly or in bodies, and from nine in the morning till dusk, the place was crowded, and the merry music of the iron on the ice ceased not for a second.

I discovered this place of resort by accident one day, when I was taking a constitutional, and found myself upon the borders of the great frozen mere, covered with skaters. I stood looking at them, and my blood warmed at the sight. If there were one thing—one accomplishment upon which I prided myself, it was this very one—skating.

In a drawing-room I might feel awkward—confused amongst clever people, bashful amongst accomplished ones; shy about music and painting, diffident as to my

voice, and deprecatory in spirit as to the etiquette to be observed at a dinner-party. Give me my skates and put me on a sheet of ice, and I was at home.

As I paused and watched the skaters, it struck me that there was no reason at all why I should deny myself *that* seasonable enjoyment. I had my skates, and the mere was large enough to hold me as well as the others—indeed, I saw in the distance great tracts of virgin ice to which no skater seemed yet to have reached.

I went home, and, on the following afternoon, carried out my resolution; though it was after three o'clock before I could set out.

A long, bleak way. First up the merry *Jägerhofstrasse*, then through the *Malkasten* garden, up a narrow lane, then out upon the open, bleak road, with that bitter wind going ping-ping at one's ears and upon one's cheek. Through a big gateway, and a courtyard pertaining to an orphan asylum—along a lane bordered with apple trees, through a rustic arch, and, hurrah! the field was before me—not so thickly covered as yesterday, for it was getting late, and the Elberthalers did not seem to understand the joy of careering over the black ice by moonlight, in the night-wind. It was, however, as yet far from dark, and the moon was rising in silver yonder, in a sky of a pale but clear blue.

I quickly put on my skates—stumbled to the edge, and set off. I took a few turns, circling amongst the people—then, seeing several turn to look at me, I fixed my eyes upon a distant clump of reeds rising from the ice, and

resolved to make it my goal. I could only just see it, even with my long-sighted eyes, but struck out for it bravely. Past group after group of the skaters, who turned to look at my scarlet shawl as it flashed past. I glanced at them and skimmed smoothly on, till I came to the outside circle where there was a skater all alone, his hands thrust deep into his great-coat pockets, the collar of the same turned high about his ears, and the inevitable little gray cloth *Studentenhut* crowning the luxuriance of waving dark hair. He was gliding round in complicated figures and circles, doing the outside edge for his own solitary gratification, so far as I could see; active, graceful, and muscular, with practised ease and assured strength in every turn of every limb. It needed no second glance on my part to assure me who he was—even if the dark bright eyes had not been caught by the flash of my shawl, and gravely raised for a moment as I flew by. I dashed on, breasting the wind. To reach the bunch of reeds seemed more than ever desirable now. I would make it my sole companion until it was time to go away. At least he had seen me, and I was safe from any *contretemps*—he would avoid me as strenuously as I avoided him. But the first fresh lust after pleasure was gone. Just one moment's glance into a face had had the power to alter everything so much. I skated on, as fast, as surely as ever, but—

"A joy has taken flight."

The pleasant sensation of solitude, which I could so easily have felt amongst a thousand people had he not been

counted amongst them, was gone. The roll of my skates upon the ice had lost its music for me: the wind felt colder—I sadder. At least I thought so. Should I go away again now that this disturbing element had appeared upon the scene? No, no, no, said something eagerly within me, and I bit my lip, and choked back a kind of sob of disgust as I realized that despite my gloomy reflections my heart was beating a high, rapid march of—joy! as I skimmed, all alone, far away from the crowd, amongst the dismal withered reeds, and round the little islets of stiffened grass and rushes, which were frozen upright in their places.

The daylight faded, and the moon rose. The people were going away. The distant buzz of laughter had grown silent. I could dimly discern some few groups, but very few, still left, and one or two solitary figures. Even my preternatural eagerness could not discern who they were. The darkness, the long walk home, the Probe at seven, which I should be too tired to attend, all had quite slipped from my mind: it was possible that amongst those figures which I still dimly saw, was yet remaining that of Courvoisier, and surely there was no harm in my staying here.

I struck out in another direction, and flew on in the keen air; the frosty moon shedding a weird light upon the black ice; I saw the railway lines, polished, gleaming too in the light: the belt of dark firs to my right; the red sand soil frozen hard and silvered over with frost. Flat and tame, but still beautiful. I felt a kind of rejoicing in it: I felt it home. I was probably the first person who had

been there since the freezing of the mere, thought I, and that idea was soon converted to a certainty in my mind, for in a second my rapid career was interrupted. At the farthest point from help or human presence the ice gave way with a crash, and I shrieked aloud at the shock of the bitter water. Oh, how cold it was! how piercing, frightful, numbing! It was not deep—scarcely above my knees, but the difficulty was how to get out. Put my hand where I would, the ice gave way. I could only plunge in the icy water, feeling the sodden grass under my feet. What sort of things might there not be in that water? A cold shudder, worse than any ice, shot through me at the idea of newts and rats and water-serpents, absurd though it was. I screamed again in desperation, and tried to haul myself out by catching at the rushes. They were rotten with the frost, and gave way in my hand. I made a frantic effort at the ice again; stumbled and fell on my knees in the water. I was wet all over now, and I gasped. My limbs ached agonizingly with the cold. I should be, if not drowned, yet benumbed, frozen to death here alone in the great mere, amongst the frozen reeds and under the steely sky.

I was pausing, standing still, and rapidly becoming almost too benumbed to think or hold myself up, when I heard the sound of skates and the weird measure of the *Lenore* March again. I held my breath: I desired intensely to call out, shriek aloud for help, but I could not. Not a word would come.

"I *did* hear some one," he muttered, and then in the moonlight he came skating past, saw me, and stopped.

"*Sie, Fräulein!*" he began quickly, and then, altering his tone: "The ice has broken. Let me help you."

"Don't come too near; the ice is very thin—it doesn't hold at all," I chattered, scarcely able to get the words out.

"You are cold?" he asked, and smiled. I felt the smile cruel; and realized that I probably looked rather ludicrous.

"*Cold!*" I repeated, with an irrepressible short sob.

He knelt down upon the ice at about a yard's distance from me.

"Here it is strong," said he, holding out his arms. "Lean this way, *mein Fräulein*, and I will lift you out."

"Oh no! You will certainly fall in yourself."

"Do as I tell you," he said imperatively, and I obeyed, leaning a little forward. He took me round the waist, lifted me quietly out of the water, and placed me upon the ice at a discreet distance from the hole in which I had been stuck, then rose himself, apparently undisturbed by the effort.

Miserable, degraded object that I felt! My clothes clinging round me; icy cold, shivering from head to foot; so aching with cold that I could no longer stand. As he opened his mouth to say something about its being "happily accomplished," I sank upon my knees at his feet. My strength had deserted me; I could no longer support myself.

"Frozen!" he remarked to himself, as he stooped and half raised me. "I see what must be done. Let me take off your skates—*sonst geht's nicht.*"

I sat down upon the ice, half hysterical, partly from the sense of the degrading, ludicrous plight I was in, partly from intense yet painful delight at being thus once more with him, seeing some recognition in his eyes again, and hearing some cordiality in his voice.

He unfastened my skates deftly and quickly, slung them over his arm, and helped me up again. I essayed feebly to walk, but my limbs were numb with cold. I could not put one foot before the other, but could only cling to his arm in silence.

"So!" said he, with a little laugh. "We are all alone here! A fine time for a moonlight skating."

"Ah! yes," said I wearily, "but I can't move."

"You need not," said he. "I am going to carry you away in spite of yourself, like a popular preacher."

He put his arm round my waist and bade me hold fast to his shoulder. I obeyed, and directly found myself carried along in a swift delightful movement, which seemed to my drowsy, deadened senses, quick as the nimble air, smooth as a swallow's flight. He was a consummate master in the art of skating—that was evident. A strong, unfailing arm held me fast. I felt no sense of danger, no fear lest he should fall or stumble; no such idea entered my head.

We had far to go—from one end of the great *Schwanenspiegel* to the other. Despite the rapid motion, numbness overcame me; my eyes closed, my head sank upon my hands, which were clasped over his shoulder. A sob rose to my throat. In the midst of the torpor that was stealing



over me, there shot every now and then a shiver of ecstasy so keen as to almost terrify me. But then even that died away. Everything seemed to whirl round me—the meadows and trees, the stiff rushes and the great black sheet of ice, and the white moon in the inky heavens became only a confused dream. Was it sleep or faintness, or coma? *What* was it that seemed to make my senses as dull as my limbs, and as heavy? I scarcely felt the movement, as he lifted me from the ice to the ground. His shout did not waken me, though he sent the full power of his voice ringing out towards the pile of buildings to our left.

With the last echo of his voice I lost consciousness entirely; all failed and faded, and then vanished before me, until I opened my eyes again feebly, and found myself in a great stony-looking room, before a big black stove, the door of which was thrown open. I was lying upon a sofa, and a woman was bending over me. At the foot of the sofa, leaning against the wall, was Courvoisier, looking down at me, his arms folded, his face pensive.

"Oh dear!" cried I, starting up. "What is the matter? I must go home."

"You shall—when you can," said Courvoisier, smiling as he had smiled when I first knew him, before all these miserable misunderstandings had come between us.

My apprehensions were stilled. It did me good, warmed me, sent the tears trembling to my eyes, when I found that his voice had not resumed the old accent of ice, nor his eyes that cool, unrecognizing stare which had frozen me so many a time in the last few weeks.

"*Trinken Sie 'mal, Fräulein,*" said the woman, holding a glass to my lips: it held hot spirits and water, which smoked.

"Bah!" replied I gratefully, and turning away.

"*Nee, nee!*" she repeated. "You must drink just a *Schnäppschen, Fräulein.*"

I pushed it away with some disgust. Courvoisier took it from her hand and held it to me.

"Don't be so foolish and childish. Think of your voice after this," said he, smiling kindly; and I, with an odd sensation, choked down my tears and drank it. It was bad—despite my desire to please, I found it very bad.

"Yes, I know," said he, with a sympathetic look, as I made a horrible face after drinking it, and he took the glass. "And now this woman will lend you some dry things. Shall I go straight to Elberthal and send a *Droschke* here for you, or will you try to walk home?"

"Oh, I will walk. I am sure it would be the best—if —do you think it would?"

"Do you feel equal to it? is the question," he answered, and I was surprised to see that though I was looking hard at him, he did not look at me, but only into the glass he held.

"Yes," said I. "And they say that people who have been nearly drowned should always walk; it does them good."

"In that case then," said he, repressing a smile, "I should say it would be better for you to try. But pray make haste and get your wet things off, or you will come to serious harm."

"I will be as quick as ever I can."

"No hurry," he replied, sitting down, and pulling one of the woman's children towards him. "Come, *mein Junge*, tell me how old you are?"

I followed the woman to an inner room, where she divested me of my dripping things, and attired me in a costume consisting of a short full brown petticoat, a blue woollen jacket, thick blue knitted stockings, and a pair of wide low shoes, which habiliments constituted the uniform of the orphan asylum of which she was matron, and belonged to her niece.

She expatiated upon the warmth of the dress, and did not produce any outer wrap or shawl, and I, only anxious to go, said nothing, but twisted up my loose hair, and went back into the large stony room before spoken of, from which a great noise had been proceeding for some time.

I stood in the doorway and saw Eugen surrounded by other children, in addition to the one he had first called to him. There were likewise two dogs, and they—the children, the dogs, and Herr Concertmeister Courvoisier most of all—were making as much noise as they *possibly* could. I paused for a moment to have the small gratification of watching the scene. One child on his knee, and one on his shoulder pulling his hair, which was all ruffled and on end, a laugh upon his face, a dancing light in his eyes, as if he felt happy and at home amongst all the little flaxen heads.

Could he be the same man who had behaved so coldly to me? My heart went out to him in this kinder moment.

Why was he so genial with those children and so harsh to me, who was little better than a child myself ?

His eye fell upon me as he held a shouting and kicking child high in the air, and his own face laughed all over in mirth and enjoyment.

" Come here, Miss Wedderburn ; this is Hans, there is Fritz, and here is Franz—a jolly trio, aren't they ? "

He put the child into his mother's arms, who regarded him with an eye of approval, and told him that it was not every one who knew how to ingratiate himself with *her* children, who were uncommonly spirited.

" Ready ? " he asked, surveying me and my costume, and laughing. " Don't you feel a stranger in these garments ? "

" No ! Why ? "

" I should have said silk and lace and velvet, or fine muslins and embroideries, were more in your style."

" You are quite mistaken. I was just thinking how admirably this costume suits me, and that I should do well to adopt it permanently."

" Perhaps there was a mirror in the inner room," he suggested.

" A mirror ! Why ? "

" Then your idea would quite be accounted for. Young ladies must of course wish to wear that which becomes them."

" Very becoming ! " I sneered grandly.

" Very," he replied emphatically. " It makes me wish to be an orphan."

"Ah, *mein Herr*," said the woman reproachfully, for he had spoken German. "Don't jest about that. If you have parents——"

"No, I haven't," he interposed hastily.

"Or children either?"

"I should not else have understood yours so well," he laughed. "Come, my—Miss Wedderburn, if you are ready."

After arranging with the woman that she should dry my things and return them, receiving her own in exchange, we left the house.

It was quite moonlight now; the last faint streak of twilight had disappeared. The way that we must traverse to reach the town stretched before us, long, straight, and flat.

"Where is your shawl?" he asked suddenly.

"I left it; it was wet through."

Before I knew what he was doing, he had stripped off his heavy overcoat, and I felt its warmth and thickness about my shoulders.

"Oh, *don't!*" I cried in great distress, as I strove to remove it again, and looked imploringly into his face. "Don't do that. You will get cold; you will——"

"Get *cold!*" he laughed, as if much amused, as he drew the coat around me and fastened it, making no more ado of my resisting hands than if they had been bits of straw.

"So!" said he, pushing one of my arms through the sleeve. "Now," as he still held it fastened together, and

looked half-laughingly at me, "do you intend to keep it on or not?"

"I suppose I must."

"I call that gratitude. Take my arm—so! You are weak yet."

We walked on in silence for some time. I was happy; for the first time since the night I had heard *Lohengrin* I was happy and at rest. True, no forgiveness had been asked or extended; but he had ceased to behave as if I were not forgiven.

"Am I not going too fast?" he inquired.

"N—no."

"Yes, I am, I see. We will moderate the pace a little."

We walked more slowly. Physically I was inexpressibly weary. The reaction after my drenching had set in; I felt a languor which amounted to pain, and an aching and weakness in every limb. I tried to regret the event, but could not; tried to wish it were not such a long walk to Elberthal, and found myself perversely regretting that it was such a short one. At length the lights of the town came in sight. I heaved a deep sigh. Soon it would be over—"the glory and the dream."

"I think we are exactly on the way to your house, *nicht wahr?*" said he.

"Yes; and to yours, since we are opposite neighbors."

"Yes."

"You are not as lonely as I am, though; you have companions."

"I—oh—Friedhelm; yes."

"And—your little boy."

"Sigmund also," was all he said.

But "*Auch Sigmund*" may express more in German than in English. It did so then.

"And you?" he added.

"I am alone," said I.

I did not mean to be foolishly sentimental. The sigh that followed my words was involuntary.

"So you are. But I suppose you like it?"

"Like it. What can make you think so?"

"Well, at least you have good friends."

"Have I? Oh yes, of course!" said I, thinking of von Francius.

"Do you get on with your music?" he next inquired.

"I hope so. I—do you think it strange that I should live there all alone?" I asked, tormented with a desire to know what he did think of me, and crassly ready to burst into explanations on the least provocation. I was destined to be undeceived.

"I have not thought about it at all; it is not my business."

Snub number one. He had spoken quickly, as if to clear himself as much as possible from any semblance of interest in me.

I went on rashly, plunging into further intricacies of conversation:

"It is curious that you and I should not only live near to—each other, but actually have the same profession at last."

"How?"

Snub number two. But I persevered.

"Music. Your profession is music, and mine will be."

"I do not see the resemblance. There is little point of likeness between a young lady who is in training for a *Prima Donna* and an obscure *Musiker*, who contributes his share of shakes and runs to the Symphony."

"*I* in training for a *Prima Donna*! How can you say so?"

"Do we not all know the forte of Herr von Francius? And—excuse me—are not your windows opposite to ours, and open as a rule? Can I not hear the music you practise, and shall I not believe my own ears?"

"I am sure your own ears do not tell you that a future *Prima Donna* lives opposite to you," said I, feeling most insanely and unreasonably hurt and cut up at the idea.

"Will you tell me that you are not studying for the stage?"

"I never said I was not. I said I was not a future *Prima Donna*. My voice is not half good enough. I am not clever enough, either."

He laughed.

"As if voice or cleverness had anything to do with it. Personal appearance and friends at Court are the chief things. I have known *Prime Donne*—seen them, I mean—and from my place below the foot-lights I have had the impertinence to judge them upon their own merits. Provided they were handsome, impudent, and unscrupulous enough, their public seemed gladly to dispense with art,

cultivation, or genius in their performances and conceptions."

"And you think that I am, or shall be in time, handsome, impudent, and unscrupulous enough," said I, in a low, choked tone.

My fleeting joy was being thrust back by hands most ruthless. Unmixed satisfaction for even the brief space of an hour or so was not to be included in my lot.

"*Oh bewahre!*" said he, with a little laugh, that chilled me still further. "I think no such thing. The beauty is there, *mein Fräulein*—pardon me for saying so——"

Indeed, I was well able to pardon it. Had he been informing his grandmother that there were the remains of a handsome woman to be traced in her, he could not have spoken more unenthusiastically.

"The beauty is there. The rest—as I said, when one has friends, these things are arranged for one."

"But I have no friends."

"No," with again that dry little laugh. "Perhaps they will be provided at the proper time, as Elijah was fed by the ravens. Some fine night—who knows—I may sit with my violin in the orchestra at your benefit, and one of the bouquets with which you are smothered may fall at my feet and bring me *aus der Fuge*. When that happens will you forgive me if I break a rose from the bouquet before I toss it on to the feet of its rightful owner? I promise that I will seek for no note, nor spy out any ring or bracelet. I will only keep the rose in remembrance of

the night when I skated with you across the *Schwanenspiegel*, and prophesied unto you the future. It will be a kind of 'I told you so,' on my part."

Mock sentiment, mock respect, mock admiration; a sneer in the voice, a dry sarcasm in the words. What was I to think? Why did he veer round in this way, and from protecting kindness return to a raillery which was more cruel than his silence? My blood rose, though, at the mockingness of his tone.

"I don't know what you mean," said I coldly. "I *am* studying operatic music. If I have any success in that line, I shall devote myself to it. What is there wrong in it? The person who has her living to gain must use the talents that have been given her. My talent is my voice; it is the only thing I have—except, perhaps, some capacity to love—those—who are kind to me. I *can* do that, thank God! Beyond that I have nothing, and I did not make myself."

"A capacity to love those who are kind to you," he said hastily. "And do you love all who are kind to you?"

"Yes," said I stoutly, though I felt my face burning.

"And hate them that despitefully use you?"

"Naturally," I said, with a somewhat unsteady laugh.

A rush of my ruling feeling—propriety and decent reserve—tied my tongue, and I could not say, "Not all—not always."

He, however, snapped, as it were, at my remark, or admission, and chose to take it as if it were in the deepest

earnest; for he said, quickly, decisively, and, as I thought, with a kind of exultation:

"Ah, then *I* will be disagreeable to you."

This remark, and the tone in which it was uttered, came upon me with a shock which I cannot express. He would be disagreeable to me because I hated those who were disagreeable to me, *ergo*, he wished me to hate him. But why? What was the meaning of the whole extraordinary proceeding?

"Why?" I asked mechanically, and asked nothing more.

"Because then you will hate me, unless you have the good sense to do so already."

"Why? What effect will my hatred have upon you?"

"None. Not a jot. *Gar keine.* But I wish you to hate me, nevertheless."

"So you have begun to be disagreeable to me by pulling me out of the water, lending me your own coat, and giving me your arm all along this hard, lonely road," said I composedly.

He laughed.

"*That* was before I knew of your peculiarity. From to-morrow morning on I shall begin. I will make you hate me. I shall be glad if you hate me."

I said nothing. My head felt bewildered; my understanding benumbed. I was conscious that I was very weary—conscious that I should like to cry, so bitter was my disappointment.

As we came within the town, I said:

"I am very sorry, Herr Courvoisier, to have given you so much trouble."

"That means that I am to put you into a cab and relieve you of my company."

"It does *not*," I ejaculated passionately, jerking my hand from his arm. "How can you say so? How dare you say so?"

"You might meet some of your friends, you know."

"And I tell you I have no friends except Herrn von Francius, and I am not accountable to him for my actions."

"We shall soon be at your house now."

"Herr Courvoisier, have you forgiven me?"

"Forgiven you what?"

"My rudeness to you once."

"Ah, *mein Fräulein*," said he, shrugging his shoulders a little and smiling slightly, "you are under a delusion about that circumstance. How can I forgive that which I never resented?"

This was putting the matter in a new, and for me, a humbling light.

"Never resented!" I murmured confusedly.

"Never. Why should I resent it? I forgot myself, *nicht wahr?* and you showed me at one and the same time my proper place and your own excellent good sense. You did not wish to know me, and I did not resent it. I had no right to resent it."

"Excuse me," said I, my voice vibrating against my will; "you are wrong there, and either you are purposely saying what is not true or you have not the feelings of a

gentleman." His arm sprang a little aside as I went on, amazed at my own boldness. "I did *not* show you your 'proper place.' I did not show my own good sense. I showed my ignorance, vanity, and surprise. If you do not know that, you are not what I take you for—a gentleman."

"Perhaps not," said he, after a pause. "You certainly did not take me for one then. Why *should* I be a gentleman? What makes you suppose I am one?"

Questions which, however satisfactorily I might answer them to myself, I could not well reply to in words. I felt that I had rushed upon a topic which could not be explained, since he would not own himself offended. I had made a fool of myself and gained nothing by it. While I was racking my brains for some satisfactory closing remark, we turned a corner and came into the *Wehrhahn*. A clock struck seven.

"*Gott im Himmel!*" he exclaimed. "Seven o'clock! The opera—*da geht's schon an!* Excuse me, *Fräulein*, I must go. Ah, here is your house."

He took the coat gently from my shoulders, wished me *gute Besserung*, and ringing the bell made me a profound bow, and either not noticing or not choosing to notice the hand which I stretched out towards him, strode off hastily towards the theatre, leaving me cold, sick, and miserable, to digest my humble pie with what appetite I might.

CHAPTER III

Cui bono?

CHRISTMAS morning. And how cheerfully I spent it! I tried first of all to forget that it was Christmas, and only succeeded in impressing the fact more forcibly and vividly upon my mind, and with it others; the fact that I was alone especially predominating. And a German Christmas is not the kind of thing to let a lonely person forget his loneliness in; its very bustle and union serves to emphasize their solitude to solitary people.

I had seen such quantities of Christmas-trees go past the day before. One to every house in the neighborhood. One had even come here, and the widow of the piano-tuner had hung it with lights and invited some children to make merry for the feast of *Weihnachtabend*.

Every one had had a present except me. Every one had some one with whom to spend their Christmas—except me. A little tiny Christmas-tree had gone to the rooms whose windows faced mine. I had watched its arrival; for once I had broken through my rule of not deliberately watching my neighbors, and had done so. The tree arrived in the morning. It was kept a profound mystery from Sigmund, who was relegated, much to his disgust, to the society of Frau Schmidt downstairs, who kept a vigilant watch upon him, and would not let him go upstairs on any account.

The afternoon gradually darkened down. My landlady invited me to join her party downstairs; I declined. The



rapturous, untutored joy of half-a-dozen children had no attraction for me; the hermit-like watching of the scene over the way had. I did not light my lamp. I was secure of not being disturbed; for Frau Lützler, when I would not come to her, had sent my supper upstairs, and said she would not be able to come to me again that evening.

"So much the better!" I murmured, and put myself in a window corner.

The lights over the way were presently lighted. For a moment I trembled lest the blinds were going to be put down, and all my chance of spying spoiled. But no: my neighbors were careless fellows—not given to watching their neighbors themselves nor to suspecting other people of it. The blinds were left up, and I was free to observe all that passed.

Towards half-past five I saw by the light of the street-lamp, which was just opposite, two people come into the house: a young man who held the hand of a little girl. The young man was Karl Linders the violoncellist; the little girl, I supposed, must be his sister. They went upstairs, or rather Karl went upstairs; his little sister remained below.

There was a geat shaking of hands and some laughing when Karl came into the room. He produced various packages which were opened, their contents criticised and hung upon the tree. Then the three men surveyed their handiwork with much satisfaction. I could see the whole scene. They could not see my watching face pressed

against the window, for they were in light and I was in darkness.

Friedhelm went out of the room, and, I suppose, exerted his lungs from the top of the stairs, for he came back, flushed and laughing, and presently the door opened, and Frau Schmidt, looking like the mother of the Gracchi, entered, holding a child by each hand. She never moved a muscle. She held a hand of each, and looked alternately at them. Breathless, I watched. It was almost as exciting as if I had been joining in the play—more so, for to me everything was *sur l'imprévu*—revealed piecemeal, while to them some degree of foreknowledge must exist, to deprive the ceremony of some of its charms.

There was awed silence for a time. It was a pretty scene. In the middle of the room a wooden table: upon it the small fir, covered with little twinkling tapers: the orthodox waxen angels, and strings of balls and bonbons hanging about—the white *Christkind* at the top in the arms of Father Christmas. The three men standing in a semicircle at one side: how well I could see them! A suppressed smile upon Eugen's face, such as it always wore when pleasing other people. Friedhelm not allowing the smile to fully appear upon his countenance, but with a grave delight upon his face, and with great satisfaction beaming from his luminous brown eyes. Karl with his hands in his pockets, and an attitude by which I knew he said, "There! what do you think of that?" Frau Schmidt and the two children on the other side.

The tree was not a big one. The wax-lights were prob-

ably cheap ones: the gifts that hung upon the boughs or lay on the table must have been measured by the available funds of three poor musicians. But the whole affair did its mission admirably—even more effectively than an official commission to (let us say) inquire into the cause of the loss of an ironclad. It—the tree I mean, not the commission—was intended to excite joy and delight, and it did excite them to a very high extent. It was meant to produce astonishment in unsophisticated minds—it did that too, and here it has a point in common with the proceedings of the commission respectfully alluded to.

The little girl, who was a head taller than Sigmund, had quantities of flaxen hair plaited in a pigtail and tied with light blue ribbon—new; and a sweet face which was a softened girl miniature of her brother's. She jumped for joy, and eyed the tree and the bonbons, and everything else with irrepressible rapture. Sigmund was not given to effusive declaration of his emotion, but after gazing long and solemnly at the show, his eyes turned to his father, and the two smiled in the odd manner they had, as if at some private understanding existing between themselves. Then the festivities were considered inaugurated.

Friedhelm Helfen took the rest of the proceedings into his own hands; and distributed the presents exactly as if he had found them all growing on the tree, and had not the least idea of what they were nor whence they came. A doll which fell to the share of the little Gretchen was from Sigmund, as I found from the lively demonstrations that took place. Gretchen kissed him, at which every

one laughed, and made him kiss the doll, or receive a kiss from it—a waxy salute which did not seem to cause him much enthusiasm.

I could not see what the other things were, only it was evident that every one gave every one else *something*, and Frau Schmidt's face relaxed into a stern smile on one or two occasiôns, as the young men presented her one after the other with some offering, accompanied with speeches, and bows and ceremony. A conspicuous parcel done up in white paper was left to the last. Then Friedhelm took it up, and apparently made a long harangue, for the company—especially Karl Linders—became attentive. I saw a convulsive smile twitch Eugen's lips now and then, as the oration proceeded. Karl by-and-by grew even solemn, and it was with an almost awe-struck glance that he at last received the parcel from Friedhelm's hands, who gave it as if he were bestowing his blessing.

Great gravity, eager attention on the part of the children, who pressed up to him as he opened it; then the last wrapper was torn off, and to my utter amazement and bewilderment Karl drew forth a white woolly animal of indefinite race, on a green stand. The look which crossed his face was indescribable; the shout of laughter which greeted the discovery penetrated even to my ears.

With my face pressed against the window I watched; it was really too interesting. But my spying was put an end to. A speech appeared to be made to Frau Schmidt, to which she answered by a frosty smile and an elaborate courtesy. She was apparently saying good-night, but, with

the instinct of a housekeeper, set a few chairs straight, pulled a table-cloth, and pushed a footstool to its place, and in her tour round the room, her eyes fell upon the windows. She came and put the shutters to. In one moment it had all flashed from my sight—tree and faces and lamplight and brightness.

I raised my chin from my hands, and found that I was cold, numb, and stiff. I lighted the lamp, and passed my hands over my eyes; but could not quite find myself, and instead of getting to some occupation of my own, I sat with Richter's "Thorough Bass and Harmony" before me; and a pen in my hand, and wondered what they were doing *now*.

It was with the remembrance of this evening in my mind to emphasize my loneliness that I woke on Christmas morning.

At post time my landlady brought me a letter, scented, monogrammed, with the Roman post-mark. Adelaide wrote:

"I won't wish you a merry Christmas. I think it is such nonsense. Who does have a merry Christmas now, except children and paupers? And, all being well—or rather ill, so far as I am concerned—we shall meet before long. We are coming to Elberthal. I will tell you why when we meet. It is too long to write—and too vexatious" (this word was half-erased), "troublesome. I will let you know when we come, and our address. How are you getting on?

"Adelaide."

I was much puzzled with this letter, and meditated long over it. Something lay in the background. Adelaide was not happy. It surely could not be that Sir Peter gave her any cause for discomfort. Impossible! Did he not dote upon her? Was not the being able to "turn him round her finger" one of the principal advantages of her marriage? And yet, that she should be coming to Elberthal of her own will, was an idea which my understanding declined to accept. She must have been compelled to it —and by nothing pleasant. This threw another shadow over my spirit.

Going to the window, I saw again how lonely I was. The people were passing in groups and throngs: it was Christmas-time; they were glad. They had nothing in common with me. I looked inside my room—bare, meagre chamber that it was—the piano the only thing in it that was more than barely necessary; and a great wonder came over me.

"What is the *use* of it all? What is the use of working hard? Why am I leading this life? To earn money, and perhaps applause—sometime. Well, and when I have got it—even supposing, which is extremely improbable, that I win it while I am young and can enjoy it—what good will it do me? I don't believe it will make me very happy. I don't know that I long for it very much. I don't know why I am working for it, except because Herr von Francius has a stronger will than I have, and rather compels me to it. Otherwise——

"Well, what should I like? What do I wish for?"

At the moment I seemed to feel myself free from all prejudice and all influence, and surveying with a calm, impartial eye, possibilities and prospects, I could not discover that there was anything I particularly wished for. Had something within me changed during the last night ?

I had been so eager before ; I felt so apathetic now. I looked across the way. I dimly saw Courvoisier snatch up his boy, hold him in the air, and then, gathering him to him, cover him with kisses. I smiled. At the moment I felt neutral—experienced neither pleasure nor pain from the sight. I had loved the man so eagerly and intensely —with such warmth, fervor, and humility. It seemed as if now a pause had come (only for a time, I knew, but still a pause) in the warm current of delusion, and I contemplated facts with a dry, unmoved eye. After all—what was he ? A man who seemed quite content with his station—not a particularly good or noble man that I could see : with some musical talent which he turned to account to earn his bread. He had a fine figure, a handsome face, a winning smile, plenty of presence of mind, and an excellent opinion of himself.

Stay ! Let me be fair—he had only asserted his right to be treated as a gentleman by one whom he had treated in every respect as a lady. He did not want me—nor to know anything about me—else why could he laugh for very glee as his boy's eyes met his ? Want me ? No ! he was rich already. What he had was sufficient for him, and no wonder, I thought, with a jealous pang.

Who would want to have anything to do with grown-up

people, with their larger selfishnesses, more developed self-seeking—robust jealousies, and full-grown exactions and sophistications, when they had a beautiful little one like that? A child of one's own—not any child, but that very child to love in that ideal way. It was a relation that one scarcely sees out of a romance: it was the most beautiful thing I ever saw.

His life was sufficient to him. He did not suffer as I had been suffering. Suppose some one were to offer him a better post than that he now had. He would be glad, and would take it without a scruple. Perhaps, for a little while some casual thought of me might now and then cross his mind—but not for long, certainly in no importunate or troublesome manner. While I—why was I there, if not for his sake? What, when I accepted the proposal of von Francius, had been my chief thought? It had been, though all unspoken, scarcely acknowledged—yet a whispered force—"I shall not lose sight of him—of Eugen Courvoisier." I was rightly punished.

I felt no great pain just now, in thinking of this. I saw myself, and judged myself, and remembered how Faust had said once, in an immortal passage, half to himself, half to Mephisto:

"Entbehren sollst du; sollst entbehren."

And that read both ways, it comes to the same thing.

"Entbehren sollst du; sollst entbehren."

It flitted rhythmically through my mind on this dreamful morning, when I seemed a stranger to myself, or rather,

when I seemed to stand outside myself, and contemplate, calmly and judicially, the heart which had of late beaten and throbbed with such vivid, and such unreasoning, unconnected pangs. It is as painful and as humiliating a description of self-vivisection as there is, and one not without its peculiar merits.

The end of my reflections was the same as that which is, I believe, often arrived at by the talented class called philosophers, who spend much learning and science in going into the questions about whose skirts I skimmed: many of them, like me, after summing up, say, *Cui bono?*

So passed the morning, and the gray cloud still hung over my spirits. My landlady brought me a slice of *Kuchen* at dinner-time, for Christmas; and wished me *guten Appetit* to it, for which I thanked her with gravity.

In the afternoon I turned to the piano. After all it was Christmas-day. After beginning a bravura singing-exercise, I suddenly stopped myself, and found myself, before I knew what I was about, singing the *Adeste Fidelis*—till I could not sing any more. Something rose in my throat—ceasing abruptly, I burst into tears, and cried plentifully over the piano keys.

"In tears, Fräulein May! *Aber*—what does that mean?"

I looked up. Von Francius stood in the doorway, looking not unkindly at me, with a bouquet in his hand of Christmas roses and ferns.

"It is only because it is Christmas," said I.

"Are you quite alone?"

"Yes."

"So am I."

"You! But you have so many friends."

"Have I? It is true, that if friends count by the number of invitations that one has, I have many. Unfortunately I could not make up my mind to accept any. As I passed through the flower-market this morning I thought of you—naturally. It struck me that perhaps you had no one to come and wish you the Merry Christmas and Happy New Year which belongs to you of right, so *I* came, and have the pleasure to wish it you now, with these flowers, though truly they are not *Maiblümchen*."

He raised my hand to his lips, and I was quite amazed at the sense of strength, healthiness, and new life which his presence brought.

"I am very foolish," I remarked; "I ought to know better. But I am unhappy about my sister, and also I have been foolishly thinking of old times, when she and I were at home together."

"*Ei!* That is foolish. Those things—old times and all that—are the very deuce for making one miserable. Strauss—he who writes dance music—has made a waltz, and called it 'The Good Old Times.' *Lieber Himmel!* Fancy *waltzing* to the memory of old times! A requiem or a funeral march would have been intelligible."

"Yes."

"Well, you must not sit here and let these old times say what they like to you. Will you come out with me?"

"Go out!" I echoed, with unwilling shrinking from it. My soul preferred rather to shut herself up in her case

and turn surlily away from the light outside. But, as usual, he had his way.

"Yes—out. The two loneliest people in Elberthal will make a little *Zauberfest* for themselves. I will show you some pictures. There are some new ones at the Exhibition. Make haste."

So calm, so matter-of-fact was his manner, so indisputable did he seem to think his proposition, that I half rose; then I sat down again.

"I don't want to go out, Herr von Francius."

"That is foolish. Quick! before the daylight fades, and it grows too dark for the pictures."

Scarcely knowing why I complied, I went to my room and put on my things. What a shabby sight I looked! I felt it keenly; so much, that when I came back and found him seated at the piano, and playing a wonderful in and out fugue of immense learning and immense difficulty, and quite without pathos or tenderness, I interrupted him incontinently.

"Here I am, Herr von Francius. You have asked the most shabbily-dressed person in Elberthal to be your companion. I have a mind to make you hold to your bargain, whether you like it or not."

Von Francius turned, surveying me from head to foot, with a smile. All the pedagogue was put off. It was holiday-time. I was half vexed at myself for beginning to feel as if it were holiday-time with me too.

We went out together. The wind was raw and cold, the day dreary, the streets not so full as they had been. We

went along the street past the *Tonhalle*, and there we met Courvoisier alone. He looked at us, but though von Francius raised his hat, he did not notice us. There was a pallid change upon his face, a fixed look in his eyes, a strange, drawn, subdued expression upon his whole countenance. My heart leaped with an answering pang. That mood of the morning had fled. I had "found myself again," but again not "happily."

I followed von Francius up the stairs of the picture exhibition. No one was in the room. All the world had other occupations on Christmas afternoon, or preferred the stove-side and the family circle.

Von Francius showed me a picture which he said every one was talking about.

"Why?" I inquired when I had contemplated it, and failed to find it lovely.

"The drawing, the grouping, are admirable, as you must see. The art displayed is wonderful. I find the picture excellent."

"But the subject?" said I.

It was not a large picture, and represented the interior of an artist's atelier. In the foreground a dissipated-looking young man tilted his chair backwards as he held his gloves in one hand, and with the other stroked his moustache, while he contemplated a picture standing on an easel before him. The face was hard, worn, *blasé;* the features originally good, and even beautiful, had had all the latent loveliness worn out of them by a wrong, unbeautiful life. He wore a tall hat, very much to one side, as if

to accent the fact that the rest of the company, upon whom he had turned his back, certainly did not merit that he should be at the trouble of baring his head to them. And the rest of the company—a girl, a model, seated on a chair upon a raised daïs, dressed in a long, flounced white skirt, not of the freshest, some kind of oriental wrap falling negligently about it—arms, models of shapeliness, folded, and she crouching herself together as if wearied, or contemptuous, or perhaps a little chilly. Upon a divan near her a man—presumably the artist to whom the establishment pertained—stretched at full length, looking up carelessly into her face, a pipe in his mouth, with indifference and—scarcely impertinence—it did not take the trouble to be a fully-developed impertinence—in every gesture. This was the picture; faithful to life, significant in its very insignificance, before which von Francius sat, and declared that the drawing, coloring, and grouping were perfect.*

"The subject?" he echoed after a pause. "It is only a scrap of artist-life."

"Is *that* artist-life?" said I, shrugging my shoulders. "I do not like it at all; it is common, low, vulgar. There is no romance about it; it only reminds one of stale tobacco and flat champagne."

"You are too particular," said von Francius after a pause, and with a flavor of some feeling which I did not quite understand, tincturing his voice.

For my part, I was looking at the picture and thinking

* The original is by Charles Herman, of Brussels.



of what Courvoisier had said: "Beauty, impudence, assurance, and an admiring public." That girl was beautiful—at least, she had the battered remains of a decided beauty; she had impudence certainly, and assurance too, *and* an admiring public, I supposed, which testified its admiration by lolling on a couch and staring at her, or keeping its hat on and turning its back to her.

"Do you really admire the picture, Herr von Francius?" I inquired.

"Indeed I do. It is so admirably true. That is the kind of life into which I was born, and in which I was for a long time brought up; but I escaped from it."

I looked at him in astonishment. It seemed so extraordinary that that model of reticence should speak to me, above all, upon himself. It struck me for the very first time that no one ever spoke of von Francius as if he had any one belonging to him. Calm, cold, lonely, self-sufficing—and self-sufficing, too, because he must be so, because he had none other to whom to turn—that was his character, and viewing him in that manner I had always judged him. But what might the truth be?

"Were you not happy when you were young?" I asked, on a quick impulse.

"Happy! Who expects to be happy? If I had been simply not miserable, I should have counted my childhood a good one; but——"

He paused a moment, then went on:

"Your great novelist, Dickens, had a poor, sordid kind of childhood, in outward circumstances. But mine was

spiritually sordid—hideous, repulsive. There are some plants which spring from and flourish in mud and slime; they are but a flabby, pestiferous growth, as you may suppose. I was, to begin with, a human specimen of that kind; I was in an atmosphere of moral mud, an intellectual hot-bed. I don't know what there was in me that set me against the life; that I never can tell. It was a sort of hell on earth that I was living in. One day something happened—I was twelve years old then—something happened, and it seemed as if all my nature—its good and its evil, its energies and indolences, its pride and humility—all ran together, welded by the furnace of passion into one furious, white-hot rage of anger, rebellion. In an instant I had decided my course; in an hour I had acted upon it. I am an odd kind of fellow, I believe. I quitted that scene, and have never visited it since. I cannot describe to you the anger I then felt, and to which I yielded. Twelve years old I was then. I fought hard for many years; but, *mein Fräulein*—" (he looked at me, and paused a moment)—"that was the first occasion upon which I ever was really angry; it has been the last. I have never felt the sensation of anger since—I mean personal anger. Artistic anger I have known; the anger at bad work, at false interpretations, at charlatanry in art; but I have never been angry with the anger that resents. I tell you this as a curiosity of character. With that brief flash, all resentment seemed to evaporate from me—to exhaust itself in one brief, resolute, effective attempt at self-cleansing, self-government."

He paused.

"Tell me more, Herr von Francius?" I besought. "Do not leave off there. Afterwards?"

"You really care to hear? Afterwards I lived through hardships in plenty; but I had effectually severed the whole connection with that which dragged me down. I used all my will to rise. I am not boasting, but simply stating a peculiarity of my temperament when I tell you that what I determine upon I always accomplish. I determined upon rising, and I have risen to what I am. I set it, or something like it, before me as my goal, and I have attained it."

"Well?" I asked, with some eagerness; for I, after all my unfulfilled strivings, had asked myself *Cui bono?* "And what is the end of it? Are you satisfied?"

"How quickly and how easily you see!" said he with a smile. "I value the position I have, in a certain way—that is, I see the advantage it gives me, and the influence. But that deep inner happiness, which lies outside of condition and circumstances—that feeling of the poet in *Faust*—don't you remember?—

"'I nothing had, and yet enough'—

all that is unknown to me. For I ask myself, *Cui bono?*"

"Like me," I could not help saying.

He added:

"Fräulein May, the nearest feeling I have had to happiness has been the knowing you. Do you know that you are a person who makes joy?"

"No, indeed I did not."

"It is true, though. I should like, if you do not mind —if you can say it truly—to hear from your lips that you look upon me as your friend."

"Indeed, Herr von Francius, I feel you my very best friend, and I would not lose your regard for anything," I was able to assure him.

And then, as it was growing dark, the woman from the receipt of custom by the door came in and told us that she must close the rooms.

We then got up and went out. In the street the lamps were lighted, and the people going up and down.

Von Francius left me at the door of my lodgings.

"Good-evening, *liebes Fräulein;* and thank you for your company this afternoon."

A light burnt steadily all evening in the sitting-room of my opposite neighbors; but the shutters were closed. I only saw a thin stream coming through a chink.

END OF VOL. I.